



# **Jean Carver Duhme**

*~ A Smoky Valley Memoir ~*

# Jean Carver Duhme

*~ A Smoky Valley Memoir ~*



Nye County Press

©2008 by Nye County Press

All photos courtesy of Jean Carver Duhme

Cover image: Jean Carver, pictured with son Dick in front of the old ranch house on the Carver ranch, 1947, prior to the Carver family's construction of Carver's Station, Smoky Valley, Nevada.

Book design by Stephanie Hamill, Loveland, Colorado

The material in this book may be freely reproduced for educational purposes without special permission from the publisher, although credit should be given to the source. Systematic or large-scale reproduction and distribution, or inclusion in any publication for sale, may be done only with prior written permission by the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-878138-02-6

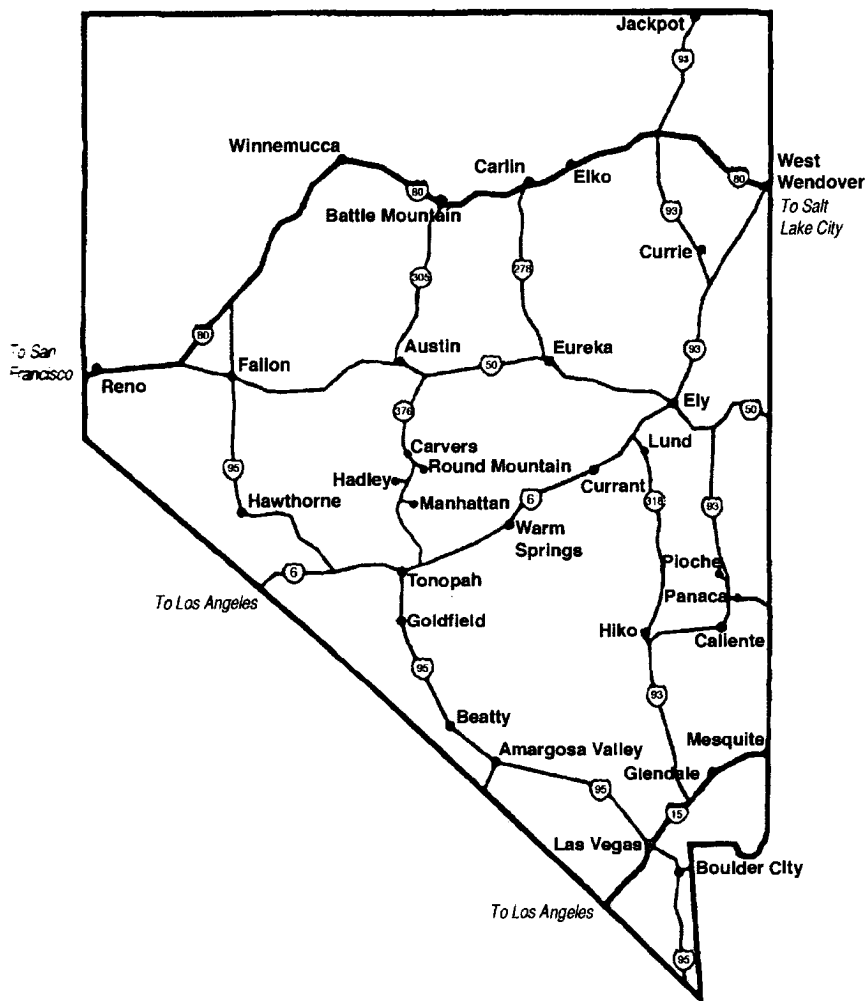
Nye County Press  
P.O. Box 153  
Tonopah, Nevada 89049

Printed in the United States of America

# Contents

Foreword.....	1
Introduction.....	3
The Ranch House.....	5
Fishing for Trout .....	9
Mountain Lions: Missing by a Mile .....	13
Mountain Sheep: Monarchs of the Landscape.....	17
Raising—and Losing—Our Ranch Animals.....	21
Mr. Jones and the Gas Leak .....	25
Buck .....	27
Snooks.....	29
Learning the Hard Way .....	31
Deer Hunting.....	33
Fishing .....	37
Herman Schappel .....	39
A Wily Buckskin.....	41
We Build a Station .....	43
A New Highway Is Built.....	47
Goats Are a Pain.....	51
Blood.....	55
Moving to the Station .....	57
The Winter of ‘49.....	61

Schooling for the Boys.....	65
Our Telephone System .....	69
Picnics and Dances .....	73
Pat .....	77
Customers, Good and Bad .....	81
A Visit to Los Angeles .....	83
Pets.....	85
Tragedy .....	87
A New York Pickup .....	91
Embarrassment.....	93
Gary's Bonfire.....	95
Moviemaking .....	97
A New Home.....	99
Brownie.....	103
Hugh.....	105
A Lovebird and a Health Inspector .....	107
Truckers .....	109
Rene .....	111
Selling Out .....	113



*Principal highways in Nevada showing truck routes as business at Carvers changed between 1950 and c. 1975. (Map by R. Gary Raham, computer input by Jeanne Sharp Howerton)*

# Foreword

From Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Big Smoky Valley, Nevada, via Vermont, Oregon, Utah, and California—that was the course of Jean Carver Duhme's trip through life.

Jean graduated from Oregon State University when most women didn't attend college and was divorced in a time when women were scorned and shunned for that action. She moved from the big city to a place with no plumbing in the middle of nowhere, with a definite zest for life.

Being her daughter-in-love (as she called her daughters-in-law) brings a smile to my heart and many happy thoughts of the times we spent together and all the people I would never have known had it not been for Jean. I hope reading the stories she tells here is enjoyed by all. I miss her so, as do many others.

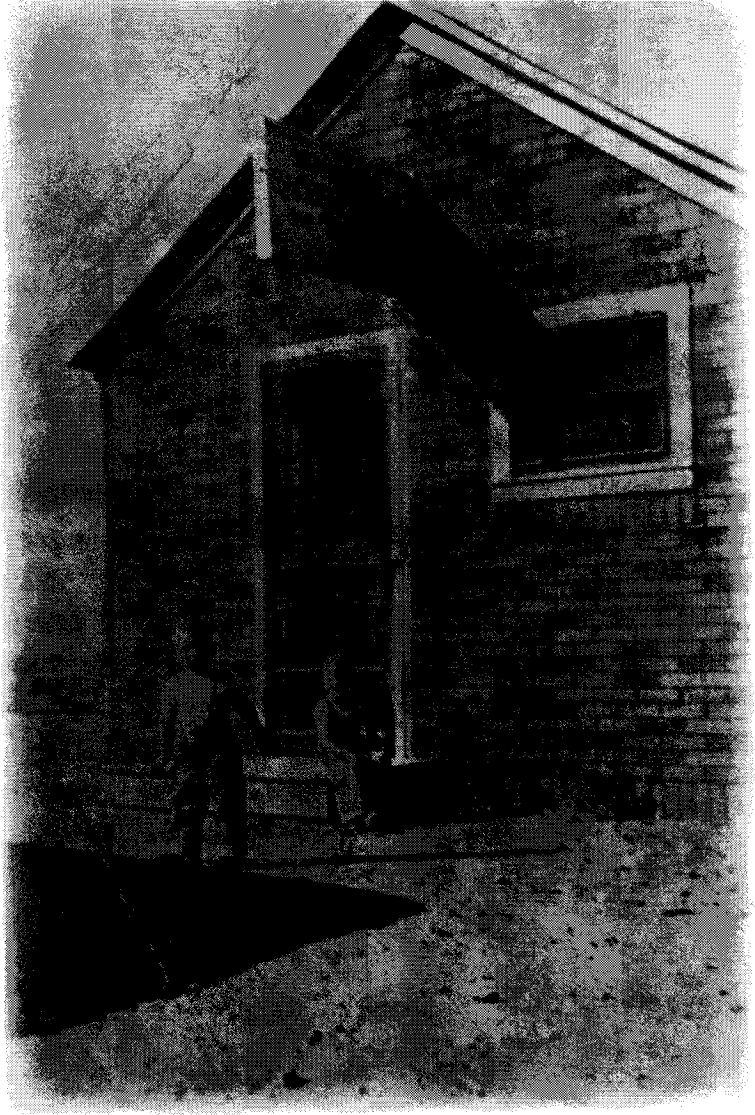
Midge Carver  
*August 2007*

# Introduction

On many occasions when I have met people who have recently arrived in Smoky Valley, they have reactions like this: “You’ve lived here since 1943? How in the world did you stand it? Didn’t you get bored?” To be truthful, I have had more fun, some danger, quite a lot of excitement, and many worrisome moments, but never a trace of boredom. There has been a lot of laughter and tears, but the joy has always come out on top. This little book is an effort to preserve, for those who are interested, a bit of the history of Smoky Valley and of Carver’s Station, as well as to amuse the reader with true stories of my life. I hope that my sons, Dick and Gary, will enjoy reliving their earlier years, as they shared so much of my life.

Jean Carver Duhme  
Round Mountain, Nevada, 1990  
(1913 – 2004)





*First photo ever taken of the Carver's Station, then known as Smoky Valley Rainbow Ranch Bar and Cafe, Smoky Valley, Nevada, 1948. Gary and Dick Carver are pictured playing on the front step.*

# The Ranch House

The year was 1948. We had opened our newly built station, which we named Rainbow Ranch, but which soon came to be known as Carver's Station. Later we made the latter designation official, and to this day it is still known as Carver's.

In many other parts of the United States at that time, a "station" probably implied a gas station. But it was unique to this part of the country, with its long mileage between towns, that a station was many things in one. It did include the necessary gas pump, motor oil, and possibly an air compressor. It also included a bar, a café serving at least sandwiches and "ham 'n' eggs," perhaps an extra bed or two. Some stations had overnight cabins, although we never did. We carried a small supply of essential groceries, some fishing tackle, a few rifle shells in the most popular calibers, candy, and cigarettes. The restrooms were primitive outdoor privies at first, and later on were updated to modern flush toilets and hot and cold running water.

It was not always so. When I first came to the Smoky Valley in 1943, my husband, Gerald, and I moved into a three-room ranch house of questionable age (and parentage). The twelve-by-fourteen-foot living-dining-kitchen area was heated by an antiquated coal and wood range on the west side and by a potbellied heat stove on the opposite side of the room. In summer, the potbelly was removed, but the big range continued to pour out its then unwelcome heat whenever we used it for cooking. In the winter, if the north wind wasn't seeping in around all the doors and windows, it was possible

to sit somewhere midway between the two stoves and keep warm both fore and aft.

Next to the kitchen range were a sink and drain boards, with cupboards built in below. It was adequate in surface, but being only about four inches deep, water flowing from the faucet had a marked tendency to carom off the bottom of the sink onto the middle of my torso.

The greatest flaw in the water system was that in midsummer, when one wanted a cold drink of water, the tap issued forth very hot water for about three minutes before it finally cooled off. This was because the water pipe ran directly from the artesian well at the corner of the house, then up the west outside wall to its point of entry directly to the faucet. Each afternoon the sun would shine on that length of pipe, making solar heating not only practical, but unavoidable. In the winter, the water situation was even more exasperating, because we had to shut off the valve at the well each afternoon at sundown and drain the pipe. Then it could not be turned back on until the sun got around to the west side of the house again. We always kept a big bucket full of water sitting on the drain board next to the stove. Although once in a while, if we were away from home for a few hours too long in the winter, the bucket of water might start to freeze.

An old round oak table, a few unmatched straight chairs, a wooden rocker of unknown vintage but of great comfort, and a couch with misused springs made up the rest of the furnishings, plus three cupboards that took up much of the remaining floor space. It was just as well that the floor space was well filled, since the flooring consisted of many layers of linoleum or enameled floor coverings laid over each other on old planks that buckled, squeaked, shook, and, in general, made a trip across the room quite an experience.

At that time our best lighting came through the windows on three sides of the room. Curtained with Mexican-print toweling, the windows were cheerful looking, as was the pale yellow paint on

the walls and ceiling. That paint covered a multitude of sins during daytime, but when darkness fell, it was necessary to light the Aladdin lamp, which gave a clear and bright light provided that (1) the wick was even, (2) the breeze didn't hit it, (3) the mantle was whole, and (4) the chimney was not sooted up.

Our other two rooms served as bedrooms, the one in the middle for winter, and the farther one for summer. Each had its individual coal and wood stove, but the summer room had so many windows that the winter winds seeped in, so we closed it off for the cold winter months, unless we had company.

Our winter bedroom had a low, flattish roofline and was ceiled, at the time of my arrival, with cheesecloth tacked to the rafters. Later I got some patterned building paper for the walls and ceiling. It looked better, although when the field mice tramped around on the top, it reminded me of a herd of horses playing overhead.

One night we heard a tremendous thumping above us. The sound moved toward the curtained closet, where there was an opening from the ceiling. Gerald brought in our three-legged cat and set him down near the closet. After a few minutes of silence, the noise seemed to descend to the closet shelf, down the wall, and onto the floor. There was the sound of a mighty pounce, a great squeak, and when we turned on the flashlight, there was Stumpy, the cat, proudly holding a king-size pack rat in his jaws. We were so pleased because a couple of weeks before that I had put a white baby sweater and bonnet to dry in the summer room. When I went to get them, the sweater was on the floor and the bonnet had disappeared completely. I never found the bonnet, but at least Stumpy had dispensed with the robber.

One year there was a huge crop of pine nuts on the local piñons, so Gerald and I harvested a large flour sack full of nuts. It should have lasted us all winter, even though we were apt to devour them. The sack was stored in a low cupboard, and the contents diminished more rapidly than they should have. Neither of us thought to mention

it, although I recall wondering how Gerald could eat so many pine nuts without making himself sick. Later in the winter, I decided to clean out the dresser drawers. As I pulled out the socks in Gerald's lowest drawer, I discovered that under all the socks there was a solid two-inch layer of pine nuts! Apparently the ever-present field mice had carefully transferred them to a storage space they preferred to ours.

I put the nuts into a new, clean sack and returned them to the original place in the cupboard. For about two weeks we enjoyed eating the succulent nuts, but suddenly the sack was empty again. Sure enough, the sock drawer was lined with pine nuts once more. This time I transferred them to a tightly lidded lard can, and we enjoyed our harvest without sharing with the mice.

The field mice were a problem as long as we lived in that old house. On several mornings, I opened the compartmented silverware drawer, only to find a nest of baby mice born there during the night. Then I would have to heat water on top of the stove and wash all the silverware before we could eat breakfast. We always had a number of cats around the place, though never enough of them to obliterate the mouse population.

# Fishing for Trout

The ranch was located in a huge valley, known as the Great Smoky Valley, about one hundred miles long and ten to fifteen miles wide, with very high mountains on either side of the valley. We lived on the western slope, only a few miles from the very precipitous Toiyabe Mountains. The land is mostly sagebrush-studded in the valley, but the mountains are partially covered with small piñon pines, junipers, and mountain mahogany. High on the slopes there were once white pines, but the early-day miners completely wiped them out to use as timbers in the mines. There are many canyons cutting into the mountain ranges, complete with small trout-laden streams. Like the white pines, there are not many trout left except for the stocked ones that the Fish and Game Commission provides. There are heavy growths of cottonwoods and willows at the lower elevations of the canyons, with quaking aspen groves higher up. Some of the canyons had fairly good roads, but the majority had only footpaths alongside the creeks, where we often could catch a mess of tasty trout.

While we lived on the ranch, we spent a lot of time fishing. To go from the valley into the canyons and mountains was to enter another world. We usually made some excuse—such as getting a load of wood—but you can bet we took our fishing poles along, too. Old Butch, our collie, would jump up on top of the cab of our old Dodge pickup, and off we'd go. But when we started to fish, Butch got bored waiting for us to try each tiny pool and riffle, so he would

finally lie down on the footpath and wait for us to get through with all that foolishness.

One day up Jett Creek, out in the open country, I was playing my worm-laden hook into a likely looking pool just under a tiny waterfall. I could see Gerald doing the same thing perhaps a hundred yards above me. I could hear nothing but the splashing of the waterfall, and I was totally engrossed in trying to lure a reluctant trout out from under a cutbank. Suddenly something made me look upstream at the precise moment that a magnificent big doe jumped the creek not ten feet above me, with Butch hot on her heels. My equilibrium was upset momentarily, and in order to avoid an icy bath in the creek, I did some gymnastics—both intricate and totally unlearned. Since Gerald had been facing downstream, he took in and thoroughly enjoyed the whole performance. But it took me a few minutes to regain my sense of humor and join him in his uproarious laughter.

Another day, up North Twin River, some five miles above the canyon mouth, I found a couple of abandoned beaver ponds that yielded several beautiful trout. As Gerald went on above me, I found a tiny pool not five feet across, under a cutbank. As fast as I could pull out a fish, rebait my hook, and put it back into the water, another fat rainbow would latch onto it. I was in fisherman's paradise! Suddenly Gerald shouted at me from the opposite bank. I motioned for him to be quiet and join me. He sat down beside me several minutes later, having maneuvered back across the creek, but he was too late to help me catch fourteen of the fattest and largest rainbows I have ever caught in this country, all from one small pool.

On one occasion we drove the pickup up Jett Canyon to a place where a snowslide had brought down a huge pile of wood during the winter. I went back to the truck after catching my limit of fish, but Gerald was still fishing above me somewhere, so I decided to load some of the dead wood onto the truck. About halfway through my

self-appointed task, I began to itch in several spots at once. Inspecting myself, I saw that I was covered with wood ticks. In a matter of seconds I had stripped off every stitch of clothing and was standing behind the truck in the middle of the road when Gerald poked around a bend—only to come upon the strange and unexpected sight of a nude woman frantically scraping off wood ticks. To be honest, even if it had been someone other than my own husband approaching, I doubt that I would have sought cover or stopped brushing off ticks. Anything is preferable to a swarm of wood ticks! While Gerald dutifully deticked my clothes and picked off the insects on that portion of my anatomy that I couldn't reach, I couldn't see anything funny in the situation. It took several hours before I began to think the experience was humorous.



# Mountain Lions: Missing by a Mile

I had learned to shoot a .22 single shot when I was in high school in Salt Lake City. Some friends used to take me to the west side of Utah Lake where, at that time, there was nothing but sagebrush and sand. We would practice shooting there at ground squirrels, which were present in large numbers. I really enjoyed shooting, and when I came here to Smoky Valley, I could do all the hunting I wanted, as long as .22 shells were available.

The first fall I was here, we drove the old Dodge up into a ravine just south of Broad Canyon, where Gerald was going to get wood for the stove. Since I could not be of much help to him, I took the .22 and walked up the ravine. A tiny bit of snow had fallen during the night, and I could easily track a big buck that had ambled up the hill somewhat earlier that day. I had some notion of sneaking up on him in his bed, although I had no intention of shooting at him. As I gained elevation the snow became deeper, and when I finally reached a small plateau, the snow cover was about six inches deep. Much to my perplexity, all over the little flat the snow was trampled, with some bits of bright red blood showing. On closer inspection, I saw both deer tracks and large paw prints, larger than my outstretched palm. I figured that a mountain lion had jumped my friend, the buck, at this place; then I saw a place farther up the ravine where the carcass of the deer had been dragged.

Suddenly utter panic enveloped me! Never mind that I had been

told that a mountain lion won't jump a person. Never mind that I had a lethal (but small) weapon in my hand that I knew how to shoot. Never mind that all the lore of the woods that I had been studying so closely told me that I was perfectly safe. I ran! Downhill! Just as fast as I could go!

Since that time, I have accepted the fact that there is plenty of room for both me and the mountain lions in these mountains, and I don't panic as quickly—but I still panic. One day I was skirting around the edge of Broad Canyon with my hunting rifle, alone and full of confidence that if I could just find a buck, I could shoot him by myself. Some friends had come hunting with me, but they were hunting along the south side of the canyon, where the pickup was parked.

The going was tough, and I finally reached a place where a high waterfall tumbles down the side of the canyon during a heavy spring runoff. I was standing there in the piñons, trying to figure out the best way to get across the steep, rocky side of the precipice, when I suddenly caught sight of something, about the size of a large housecat, as it leaped off the rocks and landed in a clearing several feet below me. Then a second one joined the first. Softly I assured them, "Don't worry, little bobcats, I am not going to shoot you." Hearing me, the two creatures turned and ran down through the trees, flipping their long tails behind them! They weren't bobcats. They were baby mountain lions. For some inexplicable reason, I took a quick shot at one of them and missed by a mile.

Then I remembered what I'd been told so often: Mountain lions won't hurt you unless—unless you bother or corner their young. Where was their mother? Did she know I had shot at one of her babies? Was she watching me from the rocks above my head? Again I panicked! I went down the hill as fast as I could go, towards the pickup. At the bottom of the canyon there was a wash about ten feet deep between me and the pickup. The side I was on sloped gently, but the other side was a sheer ten-foot wall, straight up. I walked to

~~the~~ bottom of the wash and tried to find a foothold to climb up the ~~sheer~~ side.

That was when it dawned upon me that I was standing in about ~~the~~ same spot where the baby mountain lions had been heading. Suddenly, something moved out from the sagebrush right next to ~~me~~. The next thing I knew, I was standing on top of that impossibly ~~steep~~ bank, looking down at a little cottontail rabbit bobbing down ~~the~~ wash. To this day, I cannot tell how I got up to the top of that ~~sidehill~~.

On a deer-hunting trip up Trail Canyon, I was ambling along the ~~top~~ of a ridge that was covered with thick, decomposed granite and ~~had~~ huge boulders strewn about. A few scraggly piñons had covered ~~the~~ ground beneath them with a bed of pine needles. Suddenly I came ~~upon~~ a hole, about six inches deep and maybe six inches across, with the soft humus from the pine needles turned up to expose the ~~damp~~ ground under the powdery surface. I found several other holes ~~under~~ other pine trees and was deeply puzzled by them. They were so recently dug that the warm sunny weather had not dried the surface of the newly turned soil. Days later I asked an old-timer what the holes could be. He explained that a male mountain lion sometimes will make a quick swipe with his paw and dig a hole in the soft dirt under the trees, just for the sheer joy of being alive. That time what I didn't know didn't hurt me. I did not panic!

# Mountain Sheep: Monarchs of the Landscape

Eventually I became an ardent deer hunter and looked forward to the hunting season with great anticipation. My first hunting trip was not all that successful, but something happened to make it very memorable.

Friends had come out from Tonopah, with their horses. We put their steeds and our buckskin horse in the corral, latched the gate, and went back to the ranch house to eat supper. The next day, arising long before dawn, we went out to the corral, only to find the gate open and all the horses out in the alfalfa field. We should have remembered that Buck could open almost any kind of latch. Since I could always catch Buck more easily than Gerald could, he told me to take an apple, go out in the field with a flashlight and lure Buck with the apple, so that I could get a rope around his neck and lead him back to the corral, with the other horses following him.

It was cold wandering around the field in the middle of the night (or so it seemed), but I could hear Buck nickering over in the far corner of the field, so I set off toward him, flashlight in hand, walking into the wind. An old coyote could see the light approaching him but couldn't catch my scent yet, so he just stood still, eyes on the light. I got within about fifteen feet of him and still he stood there. I stopped walking and said to him, "Well, are you going to move or am I?" That did it! He panicked first—and saved me the ignominy of another retreat. I found the horses, gave Buck the apple (same old

female trick, new timing), and we got back to the corral with all the other horses trotting obediently behind their fearless leader.

Long before the sun rose we were riding into the foothills to the west. Where the mountains began to get steeper, we all caught sight of a very heavy animal jumping a ditch and walking slowly up the sidehill. As we drew closer and could see better, we were elated to find that we were watching an enormous mountain sheep. Someone in the party drew our attention to a female with a lamb sneaking up a draw to the south of us. Obviously the ram was trying to draw our attention away from his little family. He would traverse the hillside a little way, then stop, turning his mighty horns in our direction and seemingly waiting for our admiration before resuming his slow climb up the mountain side. We were enthralled by seeing such a magnificent animal up close, as he allowed us to ride our horses within about fifty feet of him. Then he would resume his slow climb and stop again so we could admire the full curl of his horns. I had never seen a mountain sheep before, and I have never again seen one so large.

When we returned home after a fruitless deer hunt, I told Gerald about the rare sight of the mountain sheep. Five days later he came running into the house in the early morning to say, "Come, quick!" In our hay corral there were about ten of those beautiful mountain sheep feeding contentedly on our hay—until one of them saw us watching them. The signal was given and all of them started toward the mountains, sailing over the barbed wire fence as though it wasn't even there—that is, all but one. A young ram, the ends of whose horns stuck straight out forward, tried to get under the fence, but each time his horns would catch on the wire and hold him back. He paced back and forth along the fence line, trying several more times to go under the fence. Finally, with his friends and relatives nearly half a mile away, he sailed over the fence and ran to catch up with them. What a thrill it was to see those gorgeous animals in the wild!

Many years later, the herd had increased enough to have a tagged hunt for the sheep. One of our friends got a tag, and his description of

the hunt was exciting. He gave us a package of the meat, which tasted ever so much better than deer meat. But I have never wanted to go sheep hunting. The thrill of seeing that monarch of all he surveyed, standing proudly so that his mate and young could sneak up the draw and out of sight, will never be erased from my memory.

# Raising—and Losing—Our Ranch Animals

Our ranching in those days involved the development and maintenance of a small herd of Herefords and caring for a few saddle horses, some chickens, and such other assorted pets that we picked up from time to time. During the summer there was a small acreage of alfalfa to irrigate and cut, and in winter, the feeding of that crop to the livestock. The work wasn't too difficult, nor were the net proceeds too lucrative, but we managed to get along and have fun doing it.

In the summer of 1945, after our first son, Dick, was born, we were given a baby colt, a mare whom I called Pixie, to raise on a bottle. We also got ten baby lambs ("bummer" lambs were given away if the mother could not or would not raise more than one when she had twins or triplets) from a sheepman down the way. Believe me when I say it was an all-day job to feed baby Dick, baby colt, and baby lambs all on bottles. Fortunately the milk cow gave more milk than we could use, and since all except Dick soon learned to take their milk from a pan, the work fell off.

One of our greatest sources of pleasure that summer and fall was watching the lambs and the colt playing together. The lambs would stand on top of the root cellar until, at a given signal, all ten of them would stiff-leg-it down the side of the cellar, run as fast as they could to the far end of the reservoir, then wait motionless until Pixie had assembled all four legs into a running position and had caught up with

them. Without waiting for her to catch her breath, the lambs would run back to the top of the cellar, with minor variations along the way to enhance their fun, such as dodging around a gas barrel or going in and out of an open shed. This went on for months.

Of course every little lamb was a replica of Mary's Little Lamb and would follow us wherever we went. Gerald sent me down to the reservoir to open the headgate. This involved traversing a four-by-twelve-inch plank that extended from the edge of the reservoir about twenty feet out to the headgate. Once, the lambs were all aligned behind me as I walked down to the reservoir, but I paid no attention to them. However, as I began to open the headgate, I heard the tromping of little feet behind me on the plank. All ten little lambs were waiting in a row when suddenly, as in a race, they all leaped into the water. I had such a time fishing wet, woolly babies out, getting them to the shore, and trying to get them dry. They suffered no ill effects from their swim, but I caught a bad cold!

We kept one buck lamb and the ewes, and castrated the other males. However, by the time they had reached butchering age, they had become our pets, and we couldn't bear the thought of eating them. Eventually, one day—and it was a sad day—all but the buck got into the wet alfalfa field, bloated, and died. The buck became meaner as he grew older and finally became such a risk to life and limb on our place that we gave him to a neighbor who ran a flock of sheep.

Some friends came out from Tonopah one day, bringing with them the five-year-old daughter of our physician. She loved ranches, but after the buck had chased her with mayhem in his heart, she returned to her parents and told her father, "Daddy, I am going to have a ranch when I grow up, and I'm going to have lambs on it—but I am not going to have any bull lambs!"

The buck would go out to the corral when Gerald fed the milk cows and jump into the manger to prevent the cows from eating their hay. The milk cow, old Bessie, finally got tired of that, and one day



she neatly hooked her horns under the ram's belly and tossed him out of the manger. Furious, he backed across the corral as far as he could go, then, with his head down, made a long run at Bessie. She lowered her head to meet the onslaught but chose the wrong angle. He hit her curved-in horn on one side, and broke it completely off.

Several times the ram butted Gerald. One day, when Gerald dodged just in time, the ram hit the stainless steel bucket that Gerald had been carrying and folded it up like an accordion.

We had back luck with Pixie, the mare, too. Just before Christmas, she got colic and died in less than an hour. I was preparing a dinner party that night for the neighbors, and I felt lucky to be too busy to concentrate on our loss.

The hardest lesson I had to learn was to take such things in stride. Shortly after my arrival in Nevada, an old milk cow got sick. Gerald fixed up a sling under her belly to keep her on her feet in the shed, hoping she would find relief. He then went across the valley with the hay wagon to get a load of hay, while I stayed home. Every hour or so I would check on the old cow, and finally, I found her lifeless. In an absolute panic and with rivers of tears running down my cheeks, I set off across the valley on foot to tell Gerald our cow had died. When he finally found out the cause of all my tears, he said, gently, "Honey, if you are going to live around animals, you have to learn that they are all going to die someday, and you can't afford to cry over any of them." I almost learned, eventually.



*Gerald Miller Carver, Carver's Station, Smoky Valley, Nevada, ca. 1950. Carver was born 1901 and died in 1956. He moved to the Smoky Valley in 1939, after purchasing the Carver ranch. Formerly, he had been a rancher near Glendale, California, northeast of Bakersfield, California.*

# Mr. Jones and the Gas Leak

One summer, Gerald hired a nice old man from Manhattan to irrigate the alfalfa and help around the ranch. His name was Mr. Jones, and we always called him that. But Mr. Jones was nearing seventy and didn't adapt too well to our hit-or-miss lifestyle. He was also a finicky eater.

His complaints about the food were somewhat incompatible with the fact that he could outeat any older person I ever saw. If I had biscuits for breakfast, he would tell me, seriously, that he just couldn't digest rich biscuits—as he grabbed another biscuit, smeared it liberally with homemade butter, and devoured more than Gerald and I put together.

The first time I made a salad and put mayonnaise on top of it, Mr. Jones pushed aside the plate, explaining that mayonnaise was indigestible, and he couldn't tolerate it. Several days later I cut up fresh vegetables finely, mixed them with mayonnaise, stirred it all up together, and Mr. Jones not only ate it but also told me that that was the kind of salad he liked, and why didn't I serve it often? I did.

When Mr. Jones was nearly ready to return to his home in Manhattan, he asked Gerald if he would give him a good gasoline tank that he had found out in the shed. He wanted Gerald to install it on his old pickup, since his gas gauge did not work and he couldn't measure the gas in his tank because it had a crooked neck. So the two men inspected the tank, shook it well to remove any dirt in it, and then installed it on Mr. Jones' pickup, an all-afternoon project.

The next morning, Mr. Jones carried hot water from the kitchen stove to the outside laundry shed, where he bathed thoroughly, put on clean clothes, shaved, and prepared to go home. He left right after lunch, and Gerald and I went outside to sit by the artesian well in the heat of the day. In about an hour, we heard someone calling us.

Looking up the road, we could see Mr. Jones plodding along in the dust and heat. His car had quit about three miles down the road and he had had to walk back. His clean clothes were all dusty, his face a mixture of dust and sweat, and his temper extremely edgy.

Gerald drove him back to his car and towed it back to the ranch. Upon investigation, they found that a pack rat had packed the tank solidly with kapok from an old mattress in the dump. Since the kapok weighed practically nothing and did not rattle, they had assumed the tank was clean. The suction of the fuel pump had drawn the kapok up into the gas line until it was plugged up tight.

It took another day to clean out all the kapok from the tank and the gas line and to get Mr. Jones cleaned up again. By the time he left, his normally good humor had been restored, but I felt that he thought Gerald had done the whole thing to him on purpose. He never wanted to work for us any more.

# Buck

When Gerald moved here from Winnemucca, he brought with him a young buckskin horse of somewhat heroic proportions. In some ways, Buck became the most unmanageable member of our family. He learned to get out of almost anywhere and could go where he pleased. If he was confined in a pasture with enough compatible horses for company, all went well. But if he wasn't satisfied, he would lean on successive fence posts until he found one that was sufficiently ground-rotted to collapse under his 1,250-pound weight. He would pick his way very carefully through the downed barbed wire, without cutting himself at all, and go free.

Gerald and Buck were often called upon by the neighbors to rope and hold bulls or other large animals that a smaller horse could not hold. Nearly every day that Gerald rode him—usually toward the end of the day—Buck would wait for his chance, and while Gerald was rolling a cigarette, he would suddenly pull his head down, then buck sky-high, dumping Gerald on the ground. The old scoundrel would then stand still to allow Gerald to remount him, and the fun was over for another day. It had to have been some kind of game, because Buck never bucked with anyone else. Men, women, and children rode him with complete safety. He just thought it was fun to tease Gerald.

When the day's ride was over, Gerald often turned Buck loose, reins caught up in the saddle horn so the horse couldn't get his head down to graze very easily, and Buck would come home while Gerald rode in the back of a pickup with the ranchers with whom he had

been riding that day. The first time I saw Buck coming home by himself, I felt that I ought to unsaddle him and put him out in the pasture, but I really didn't know how. The saddle was easy enough to figure out, but the bridle was a little more complicated. Trying to find where to unbuckle it, I spied a buckle between Buck's ears. He put his head down for me, and I reached up to unfasten the buckle. With a great show of indignation, he jerked his head up where I couldn't reach it, then lowered it again. After several tries with the same results, I decided he was trying to tell me something. Finally I located the buckle behind his jaw, and this time Buck stood perfectly still with his head down so I could undo the right buckle.

# Snooks

Snooks Streshly was one of the most delightful old men I have ever met. He was the rural mail carrier, as well as the bringer of whatever was needed, if he could find it in Austin. His one-hundred-and-thirty-six-mile round trip from Round Mountain to Austin and back, every day except Sundays and holidays, made it very convenient for all of us in the valley to impose on him, especially since he made the return trip the same day, stopping at each ranch to deliver the mail and whatever else we had asked him to pick up for us.

In appearance, he was a medium-sized man with a happy smile, a pink face, and twinkling blue eyes that crinkled out of sight when he laughed. He was wonderfully humorous—and horrendously shy. His propensity for indulging in a little alcoholic refreshment now and then caused all of us more than a little worry when he was late with his return from Austin, since the highway over the Austin summit is about 7,445 feet above sea level and at that time was very crooked and narrow, as well as steep. It is still crooked and steep, but the road has been widened considerably since then. But in all the years I knew him, Snooks had only one accident on the summit, nearly at the bottom, when he somehow backed his pickup over the edge and landed on a ledge just a few feet lower than the roadbed. It was never clear to me just why this occurred, but with Snooks, you realized that anything could happen anytime. Due to his relaxed condition, he was unhurt, and the pickup was still capable of being driven after the tow truck retrieved it.

Handy as it was to have Snooks pick up some needed grocery item, it was even handier to have him keep everyone posted on the doings of the valley. There was very little he didn't know about each individual resident—and tell about it he did. We might have called him a rumormonger had we not felt the need to keep in touch with our neighbors. Living miles away from your nearest neighbor makes some kind of contact necessary.

During World War II, our greatest source of information about the war was Snooks. We subscribed to the Reno paper by mail, but it always arrived a day late. Meanwhile, Snooks had already read the morning paper or had listened to the radio in Austin, so he could tell us the high points. His greatest glory was on the day he told us about dropping the A-bomb on Japan. Holding his hands in the shape of a ball, he told us the A-bomb was the size of a baseball. Don't ask me where he got his information—he just knew.

Our mail was put in canvas sacks, each labeled with the owner's name, which Snooks picked up en route to Austin in the morning and returned in the afternoon. One Saturday afternoon, he brought us a drum of gasoline, which took both him and Gerald to unload. A number of other items to be delivered to folks in Round Mountain had to be removed first so the men could get to the drum. Snooks set a crate of cantaloupe on the roof of the cab, then handed me two mail sacks. "Snooks," I said, "this other mail sack isn't ours. It should have been dropped off at Schmidtlein's back at Birch Creek." His answer was, "You just keep it and read it this weekend, and I'll pick it up Monday and take it back to them."

While I was trying to figure out an answer to that one, the men had finished unloading the gas barrel, and Snooks crawled back into the cab. I can still see Gerald trotting up the driveway, hollering as he went, "Snooks, stop! The cantaloupes are still on the roof of the cab." Snooks heard him and stopped.

Snooks retired after we opened the station. We have had good and bad mail carriers since then, but no one ever matched Snooks for good, clean fun. He was a jewel.



## Learning the Hard Way

I was driving our old 1937 Chevy home from Manhattan in a pouring rainstorm—and that car had the miserable habit of getting a wet distributor and stopping whenever there was much water on the road. When it stopped this time, I just drove it off the pavement and was waiting for the heat of the engine to dry it off. Our friend Bill Wright was coming out of the valley in his Union Oil truck and recognized the car, so he pulled up in front of me and stopped. He walked back to where I was parked, getting soaking wet, and I explained why I was sitting there. Without a word, he walked back to his truck and came back with a fire extinguisher in his hand. “Bill,” I yelled, “the car isn’t on fire, it just has a wet distributor!” He laughed and said, “Don’t you know you can dry out a wet engine with a fire extinguisher?” I didn’t, but I soon found out.

We were on our way up Jefferson Canyon for a picnic one pleasant Easter Sunday. I was driving a new Plymouth station wagon. When I came to the first ford through the creek, I slowed down to cross it and then speeded up again afterwards. At the second crossing, I applied the brakes—but they didn’t work, and I went through so fast the water covered the top of the car. That was how I learned that in those days, that when the brakes were wet, they didn’t work. Oh, well, live and learn!

Bob Wilson, who took care of our electric light plant from the time he arrived in the valley in the early 1950s until we hooked up to the power lines in the late 1960s, and I were talking one day about driving; some people overcorrected when they drifted off the edge of

the pavement and then turned their cars over on the other side of the road. Bob told me that if I ever drifted off the road I should not jerk the car back on, but should ride it out as long as possible without braking or accelerating, then pull the car onto the pavement very slowly and gently. His advice saved my life. I was lighting a cigarette, driving about 90 miles an hour (before the days of speed limits), when I hit the shoulder. I held the car down through the barrow pit, up the other side, and finally back onto the pavement, thanking God all the way for his protection, and thanking Bob for advising me so well.

When I told Bob that I hated to meet a truck on the highway because the air currents pushed my car around, he told me to slow down a little before I met a truck, then accelerate just before I met it. That works, too. I am indebted to Bob for so many favors.

# Deer Hunting

Deer hunting eventually became my favorite pastime, although I loved to go fishing, too. But when the days started to become much shorter and nights became cold, I could hardly restrain my enthusiasm until the hunting season opened. Usually Gerald would ask one of his friends to take me hunting while he took care of the station.

Hammie Ott took me up behind his home in Pablo Canyon early in my career as a hunter and, although we never saw a legal deer that day, he showed me more about hunting than I ever dreamed of knowing. Since Hammie had lived in Pablo Canyon for his whole life—and he was no spring chicken at that point—he thought and acted more like an Indian or a pioneer than most people. He showed me how to read a deer track, estimate the deer's speed of travel, and judge a deer's size and sex by the size and shape of the track. He showed me deer beds, how to estimate how long ago the deer had left that bed, what direction he had taken, and how fast he was going when he left. (Had we frightened him?) He also showed me how to walk silently, without stepping on sticks or rolling stones underfoot, making people noises.

On top of a saddle where we hiked, there was a huge rock, maybe ten feet tall, with a hollow in the middle of the top of it. He gave me a boot up so I could hide in the hollow while he went down a ridge and came back up through the mahogany grove in the middle of the draw. Long before I could see anything, I could hear a deer coming up the draw toward me. It was an old doe and her fawn. She

was looking back over her shoulder at where Hammie was, and she didn't see me at all. Finally she and the fawn took shelter behind "my" rock while they waited to see where the enemy was headed. I could have leaned over and touched them both. My heart was beating like a trip-hammer, as they finally moved off softly into the piñons when Hammie approached. The wind was just right so they did not even know I was so close to them—but I wondered why they couldn't hear my heart pounding so loudly.

In those days there were so many places to hunt that all you had to do was choose which canyon you'd like to be in that day. One day a few of us decided to go up one of our favorite canyons and stay overnight, since it was quite a distance away and took an hour or two to drive up there. Long before the dawn broke, we were up and had eaten breakfast, so we were out looking for the big one by the time dawn showed. Two of us went to the top of the north ridge, the others to the south ridge.

R. E. Williamson and I came to a mahogany grove at the tope of the ridge, then separated to cover both sides of the grove as we worked our way downhill. I was sitting on some rocks where I could see the surrounding area well when I heard the crashing of brush and rolling rocks coming in my direction. I froze, my finger on the trigger, and a lovely big buck came tearing around the sidehill, stopped to look back, and I shot him dead. I was so elated, and I figured I would get R. E. to come help me, when I heard him shoot twice.

I yelled at him a couple of times, but he was too far around the side of the hill to hear me, and besides, he was a little deaf. I realized that it was totally up to me to do my own thing. I turned the deer so that his stomach was downhill, slit his throat through the jugular, then did what I had only watched before and never tried. After I opened him up, the weight of gravity made it easy to gut him out, and I was soon ready to drag him downhill.

Grabbing his horns, I tugged him around the side of the hill

toward R. E., to a place where I could get him down without trees and drop-offs in my way, and I started a downhill run. Being on the steep hillside made it relatively easy to slide the carcass downhill, and I was running to keep up the momentum. But suddenly the horns caught on a sagebrush, and I was jerked to a standstill. This happened a number of times before I finally reached the area where there was only a little slope. From there on I had all I could do to pull and tug the deer to the roadway, where the men picked it up in the pickup later.

Despite being physically exhausted, I was still so keyed up from the experience of getting my own deer with no help that I had a hard time going to sleep that night. I still can feel the exhilaration of the day.

There were a good many other deer-hunting trips after that, some successful, some not. My girlfriend Eva Craft came up from Las Vegas, and the two of us went hunting up Wall Canyon one day. We were sitting on top of a little hill, watching a saddle below us, when a nice four-pointer walked out of the trees into our range, and Eva got her first deer. We were proud as punch arriving home with a beautiful buck in the back of the pickup. But it took both of us to gut him out and drag him downhill to the road. Because there was no other way to do it, we had to hoist him up into the back of the truck—no easy job for a couple of “girls.”

# Fishing

Fishing was also an important activity in my life. When I first came to the valley, I began fishing the little streams in the canyons of the high country. At first a willow stick with a six-foot piece of fish line sufficed as my tackle. But I envied the telescope rods that some of my friends used because they could be shortened to go through the brush (of which there is a great deal along the creek banks). Trying to push through a thicket of wild rosebushes, even with just a four-foot willow stick, was hard, so getting a telescope rod became a priority, and I finally did obtain one.

There were lots of places to fish, but my favorite was North Twin River. We would hike up about five miles to some old beaver dams. The local trout were eastern brook trout and rainbows. The average fish was small—eight inches or less. Occasionally we caught twelve- or fourteen-inchers, but not often. I really didn't like to eat them much, but I loved being in the mountains and communing with nature at its best.

One day as I was plodding along the path, the brook being too brushy to get into at that point, I rounded a little hill and came face to face with a young doe. We both stopped and stared at each other; then she tripped daintily up the hill and out of sight.

A little farther along, a large bird dragged itself out from under a sagebrush next to the path; one wing was drooping and the bird was uttering piteous sounds of dismay. I stopped stock-still, looking around carefully. Sure enough, fanning out from the brush in the opposite direction were tiny yellow chicks with black spots on them.

I stood very still, scarcely breathing, and when the mother bird got far enough away, she put her “injured” wing to her side and called her chicks to her. Later I found out it was a blue grouse, which are plentiful in these mountains.

The blue grouse is also known as a “fool’s hen,” and I can see why. One day when we were wandering around the side of a mountain, two of the birds jumped into a pine tree not four feet high and stood there while we walked by. I don’t know whether they thought we couldn’t see them or couldn’t reach them. I think we could have knocked them out of the tree with a stick if we had wanted to.

# Herman Schappel

One of the people who lived in Round Mountain when I first arrived was a retired Prussian military officer named Herman Schappel. According to him, his uncle had owned a gold mine and town in Jefferson Canyon, behind Round Mountain, and had left him the entire property, along with several stone houses and a huge stone and timber building that had housed the dining facilities for the miners who worked the Jefferson Canyon mine in the early days.

Because Herman had been a German officer in World War I, he was under a large cloud of suspicion during World War II. Rumors were rampant that he had a shortwave radio up Jefferson and that the FBI held him under strict surveillance all during the war. I never found out whether the suspicions were true, but I always doubted their veracity.

During the summer, Herman lived in one of his stone cabins, which he kept as neat as a pin. When the snow piled up, he always moved to a little house he owned, on the side of the hill for which the town of Round Mountain was named.

Herman was a giant of a man, with strength to match, and he loved to hunt and fish. But he did not allow those activities in his own area of the canyon, where he fed the deer, the trout, and the chukars that came to his corral every day for their feed. Herman always hunted or fished far from the little town of Jefferson. One day he brought us a dishpan full of beautiful trout he had caught up Jett Creek. He was very proud because none of the rest of us could catch anything bigger than a six-incher in that canyon. No amount of teasing would get him



to say where he had caught the foot-long and longer eastern brookies, either. His reputation as a superfisherman would have been destroyed if anyone matched his catch.

One Sunday morning we saw a large volume of smoke issuing from Jefferson Canyon. Several people drove up there quickly, only to find a scene of utter devastation. After days and weeks of investigation, it was generally agreed that Herman had sat down on a whole case of dynamite in the old boarding house and had either accidentally or purposefully exploded the whole case. Bits and pieces of Herman were scattered about, indicating that he had lost his life in the blast and ensuing fire. But the only surefire identification was an entire thumb, the prints of which matched that of the prints the U.S. Forest Service had taken at the time he went to work for them. I have never gone back up Jefferson since that time. The canyon held too many pleasant memories of a jolly giant, with a broken accent and a heart of gold. We had had several picnics and many visits up there with Herman.

# A Wily Buckskin

One year Buck and four of our other horses were wandering around loose in the area and kept pestering our next-door neighbor, Pete Rogers. Finally Pete and a friend of his spent three weeks fencing the area around his house and installing a cattle guard at the gate. The first night after the cattle guard was installed, the horses stopped when they came to it. The second night, Buck carefully put his big hooves on each rail and walked across it. The next night he taught the other horses how to do that. Frankly, we felt like shooting Buck sometimes, but I had to admire his savoir faire.

We loaned Buck and my horse, Coffee, to a couple of friends who wanted to make a pack trip up North Twin River. They hauled a sack of grain for the horses, storing it in a partially broken-down cabin at the Forest Service pasture, where they camped. Early the next morning, our friends awoke to a strange noise and sight. The horses were calmly eating the grain from the sack, in front of the cabin where the door was now wide open, although our friends had wired it closed the night before. Nate Hecker got out of his sleeping bag, returned the grain to the cabin, and shut and wired the door again, then crawled back into his sleeping bag to watch the developments.

Buck waited until he figured our friends were asleep again, then moseyed over to the door. First he tested it with his nose and found it tightly wired shut, so he walked away until his fat rump was about ten feet from the door. Slowly he backed up, looking over his shoulder frequently to keep himself in line with the door, until his rear hit it. With a snort of satisfaction, he leaned all of his weight against the

door, the wire slipped, then gave way, and the door was open. Buck turned around to snake the sack of grain outdoors. Nate had to find the metal grain bin that the rangers had used, and store the grain in it, covered tightly, to keep the horses from foundering themselves. When our friends told us about their trip, they commented that they would not have believed it if they hadn't watched it happen before their very eyes.

## We Build a Station

It was a crazy idea in the first place. No one in his right mind would have considered it. But Gerald and I really didn't have anything to lose, and it did sound like fun, so we started on it.

The year was 1947, and the state highway department was surveying for a new state route to be known as State Route 8A. It would join the road from Tonopah on the south, where the pavement ended at the Round Mountain turnoff, and extend to meet U.S. Highway 50 twelve miles east of Austin, Nevada.

Our ranch property was located five miles north of the Round Mountain turnoff, and the highway department engineers wanted to put the road on a diagonal across one quarter of our quarter section.

It seemed logical to us that if we donated the right of way, we would then be able to use the highway frontage for a "station." We considered the fact that the local population was very small. But there were several ranches nearby, and the highway would eventually carry more and more traffic. Would a café appeal to the local populace? Probably yes, if the food was good, the price right, and, most important to many of the locals, if there was a source to buy beer and liquor.

That summer, Dodge Construction of Fallon was awarded the contract to grade and gravel the first (southern) fifteen miles, as far north as Little Horse's Ranch at Millett, an old stage stop in the early days of Smoky Valley ranching and mining. Their construction camp was located at Darrough's Hot Springs, about two and one-half miles north of here, about midway on their contract.

We, too, began our project. We sold the rainbow trout we had been raising for \$1,500, and we also sold the few cows we owned. We bought an old house in Round Mountain for \$100 worth of hay and another old house from Monarch for \$50 plus moving costs. After we had cleared an acre or so on the new highway, the two buildings were moved in and placed in an L shape. Construction of Carver's had begun!

Barney Barnhill, a good carpenter, was staying with the folks on the ranch next door. Gerald hired him, and the work began. By the following spring, the two buildings had been cleared out inside, and a bar and lunch counter, with back bar, had been built, so we decided it was time to have our Grand Opening. The date was set for April 4 and 5. We advertised in the Tonopah Times, barbecued a beef, cooked pots of beans, and lots of goodies. We had neither credit nor money to purchase the beer and liquor we would need, so Gerald borrowed \$200 from our friend, Pete Rogers, next door, and brought out the supplies from Tonopah that we would need. Several of our friends pitched in to help us out, Leona and R. E. Williamson from Manhattan, and the George Ishmael family from Kingston stand out in my memory.

The Grand Opening lasted from Saturday night until sunup Monday morning, although people did a bit of napping during the day on Sunday, while the band recuperated. The band—I think there were three in the group—had come out from Tonopah, and folks came from many, many miles around. We danced and whooped it up all night until after daylight, with a barbecue being served at midnight. The only thing we charged for were drinks.

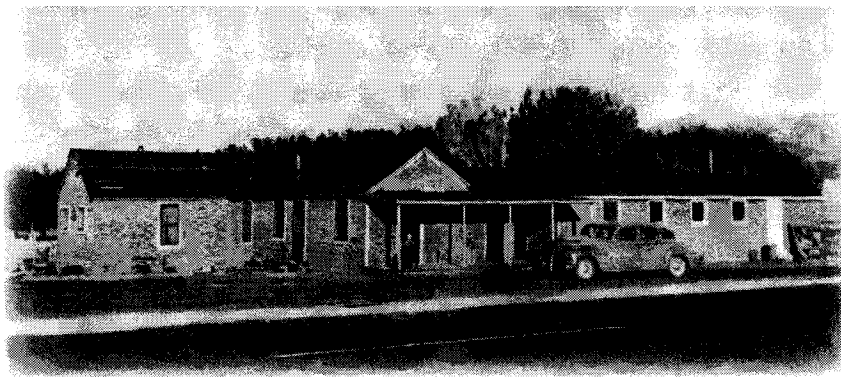
By morning the supplies were nearly gone, so Gerald took the \$200 back to Pete, then drove to Tonopah with the rest of the money we had taken in, and bought more ice, beer, pop, and liquor for Sunday night. Everyone agreed it was a great party, but there were very few people in the whole countryside who felt like going to work Monday morning.

That summer was a time for expansion, building, and work. Barney and Gerald put partitions in the building, and we finally moved our family into the back building, in the fall. Business was not too brisk, but somehow we managed, making lots of new friends in the process. Since we were the only stop on the highway in the one hundred miles between U.S. Highways 6 and 50, the majority of people traveling through did stop. There just were not many travelers!

Many evenings, especially during the winters, no one at all came through. But on other occasions we had people to cook for, although the demand was so erratic that we served only sandwiches and ham and eggs, which could be prepared quickly.



*One of the first pictures ever taken of the interior of Carver's Station about 1948 or '49. Jean Carver Duhme is pictured on the left and Gerald Carver is to her right standing behind the bar. Others are not identified. The bar top, made of solid mahogany, was originally in the old hotel located in Round Mountain, Nevada.*



*Carver's Station, Smoky Valley, Nevada, about 1949.*

# A New Highway Is Built

In the summer of 1949, three construction crews were at work in Smoky Valley, so we added a dance hall. We built it almost entirely from clothes lockers, purchased when the U.S. Army Air Base at Tonopah was dismantled. The solid maple flooring came from the Officers' Club at the air base. There was enough to floor both the dance hall and the other building.

One of the crews was building the mine and mill at Round Mountain for Fresnillo Corporation out of Mexico City, a subsidiary of the South African company, Goldfields of America. The second crew was Andy Drumm's company from Fallon, hired to grade and gravel the highway all the rest of the way to U.S. Highway 50. The paving was to be done from Round Mountain to U.S. Highway 50 by Dodge Construction, at that time the longest single paving contract let by the state, a distance of fifty-five miles.

The paving crew was not large. As soon as Drumm's crew completed work on this southern end of the road, their camp moved north and the pavers moved in with us. What a summer that was, and what work we did—and what fun we had!

Fred Mellis, who ran the Gardner mixer, had to be at work by the first touch of dawn, when the tankers would bring in their truck and trailer loads of hot oil from Bakersfield. The tankers pumped directly into the mixer as it went slowly along the windrow of gravel piled up in the center of the road.

Then Whitey Cates would start work with his grader, spreading the oiled gravel, smoothing it as he went along. Whitey was a master



in his profession, but a thorn in the side of the state inspector. Whitey liked to drink, but he seemed to be able to operate his equipment competently drunk or sober. The inspector was constantly harping at Mac, the construction superintendent, to fire Whitey, but Mac knew a good thing when he saw it. He knew there was no better blade operator in the state of Nevada than the one he had hired for this job.

We held dances about every two weeks. Early one Sunday morning after the band had gone, Whitey took over the piano playing for the few stragglers who were left. I can still see him in my memory, pounding the ivories and singing loudly, "Cruisin' down the river (on a Sunday afternoon)." When it was time for him to go to work, he left his highball glass sitting on the piano and went out to start his grader. The paving crew worked every day, including weekends. Once, somewhere in the course of the morning, Whitey decided he needed another drink, so he headed the grader straight through the sagebrush toward the Palace Club in Round Mountain. Unfortunately the state inspector saw him leave the road and intercepted him as he got back on the road near Round Mountain. The inspector ordered Whitey off the grader at once, so Whitey told the man what he could do with the grader and the highway, then walked the short distance to the bar. He had quit! Permanently!

Whitey's boss, Mac, was very unhappy, mostly at the state inspector. For two days the oiled gravel remained unspread by Whitey, although the construction company did have another man who did an average job with it. Mac talked and talked to Whitey. Finally he convinced Whitey that he was really needed, so he went back to work on the grader.

From then on Whitey and the state inspector were sworn enemies. If one of them came into our café while the other was there, he would go back out and stay out until the first one left. But the state inspector never gave Whitey another order of any kind. I'm not sure they even spoke to each other again.

The district engineer from Tonopah came out to inspect the new roadway, with the state inspector and the construction superintendent riding along, too. Quite innocently, he invited Whitey to join them on their inspection tour. As they drove along the newly surfaced road, the engineer said to Whitey, "These are some of the best joints I've ever seen," referring to the places where one day's laying of the oiled gravel met the next. (It often leaves a slight bump, but none were apparent where Whitey laid the pavement.) Whitey's reply was, tongue in cheek, "There's only two good joints in the whole road, the Palace Club and Carver's!" I was told that the state inspector almost had a stroke. The engineer, though, had a great sense of humor and laughed uproariously, while the super held his breath for the fireworks he expected. But that was it!

On a typical workday, in the late afternoon, and on until about midnight, the third member of the road paving crew, Sid Trolson, had to use the roller to smooth off the day's work. This meant getting Fred's breakfast at four in the morning, Whitey's at seven, and Sid's in the middle of the afternoon. Then Sid had to have his supper after he got off work about midnight. We hired my friend Leona's teenage daughter, Rosie, to do the dishes and help me. However, she couldn't cook or tend bar, so we had quite a time for a few weeks, napping when we could and working when we had to. It did make for a short night. But it was great when the highway was completed and we could drive all the way to Austin on a paved highway.

The friendships we made that summer lasted for a long, long time. I have had several letters from Fred, and he visited here a couple of times later on. Mac and his wife, of whom I was especially fond, came through here several times before Mac retired. One day a fellow came into the café, walked up to me, and said "You don't remember me, do you?" I confessed I couldn't place him. Laughing, he said, "Do you mean to say you have forgotten poor old Whitey?" With that, he enveloped me in a bear hug that lifted me clear off my feet. It was a happy reunion. But I never saw Sid Trolson again.

## Goats Are a Pain

The goats were the bane of my existence, from the day we acquired the first one. At a few weeks of age, Gary, our second son, developed an allergy to cow's milk, so Dr. Coogan suggested trying some other kind—goat, sheep, mare, or whatever would work. Gerald bought a fresh nanny and from then on for a number of years, I had something to dislike. The lone nanny wasn't really that bad, but after we acquired a billy goat and several kids later on, my attitude about goats went downhill.

Whenever I hung out the clothes to dry on the line, I had to watch lest the goats pull the newly washed clothes off into the dirt. Unless the garden was fenced with solid sheets of tin, it disappeared in less time than it took to plant it. The old trees were bare as far up as the goats could reach standing on their hind legs. They even used to balance on top of a horizontal two-by-four fence, on their hind legs, to reach a little higher for the leaves on the trees.

My cousin, Bob Rogers, from Portland, who was a traveling salesman, brought his wife down for a visit one time. Bob had bought a brand-new car, with a special finish on it to protect it from the elements. He parked the car in the shade of the trees. Soon the goats decided the car was a fine place to stand on in order to reach more leaves, then found out the sloping back of the car made a dandy slide. By the time we noticed the goats near the car, they had invented a game whereby they took turns hopping up on the hood to the roof, grabbing mouthful of leaves, and then sliding down the back of the car to the ground. The goats were somewhat offended

when my cousin moved the car away from the trees and put a tarp over it for protection. Fortunately the special finish really paid for itself, as there were no permanent hoof marks, after the dust was wiped off.

My ever-loving spouse thought I should learn to milk—first the cow, then the goats. The smartest move I ever made was to refuse to learn, figuring that what I didn't know how to do, I wouldn't have to do. On the few occasions when Gerald was not home to do the milking, I had a friend who liked to milk. The idea of drinking goat's milk did not appeal to me, but eventually I learned that when it is properly handled and refrigerated, it can be excellent. But the main thing was that it agreed with Gary.

When we moved up to the station, we kept the goats down on the ranch, but when one of the nannies died giving birth to twins, Gerald brought the babies up to the station and built a fence around the backyard for them and for Gary. I am still not sure how, but once in a while, one or both of the little goats would escape and come around the front of the building. There the parked cars of the customers would tempt them into playing games like jumping, climbing, and sliding. Mumbling imprecations about the entire *Capra* genus, Gerald or I would have to catch the culprit and return him to the backyard. (I often suspected that baby Gary let them out, but I never caught him in the act.)

One Saturday I was busy making preparations for a dance that night, and Gerald had gone to Tonopah to buy ice, beer, and other necessities. He took Dick with him, and I was trying to keep an eye on Gary.

In those days we didn't have inside plumbing. Instead, a double outhouse, one for men and one for women, stood a little way north of the main building. Soon Gary came in with an angelic smile on his face, saying, "Mommy, you won't have to put up with the goat's bothering you today. I shut him up in the outhouse!" I went out to rescue the goat (by then we had found a home for one of the twins)

and opened the door to the ladies' side. No goat! Opening the other door, I looked in there. No goat! Then from down in the hold, I heard a bleat. Goat!!

By reaching in as far as I could without losing my balance, I could just touch the ears and the horns. Now a little goat's short horns and ears are very tender. But there was nothing else I could reach. I had to pull very hard, since the suction of the muck he was in was terrific, but I finally got him loose and back on solid ground. Naturally I couldn't turn him loose like that, so Gary and I got the number two (honestly, that's what it is called) washtub, filled it with water from the hose and gave the goat a good bath before returning him to the backyard where he belonged.

I would have been furious and would probably have spanked Gary if I hadn't realized he really was trying to help me.

When they were paving the highway, the trucks hauling the hot oil would dump the last few gallons (which had gotten too cold) into a large depression where the highway department had been getting gravel for fill. Eventually this became a large pond of asphalt. It did solidify after a long while. But one day the goats wandered up to the pit and one of the kids sank down in the partially set oil. The boys found him there, alone and bleating furiously, totally unable to extricate himself. They managed to pry him loose and he ran home in a flash. What do you do with a kid goat half covered with partly set road oil? All I could think of was to try a bath in gasoline, then a warm soapy bath to wash off the gas. It really isn't a recommended procedure, but it did work. It is funny what you do when you have to!

# Blood

The sight of blood running out of a wound turns my stomach. One day when Gerald was using his new Diston saw, he cut deeply into his hand, and it bled copiously. I started to give him first aid, wrapping his hand in a clean towel and holding it tightly to stop the bleeding. Since I was alone at the time, I was doing fine all by myself, handling the sort of situation that usually upset me terribly. Then I remembered that my friend Mae Jewett lived in a trailer just below us, and I called the boys to run and get her quick. As soon as she got there to take over, I proceeded to have my usual reaction to the sight of blood and keeled over.

Dick and Gary were playing with their mare one day, and they came running into the house, Dick with his bloody hands on his head (or was it his bloody head in his hands?). This time I managed to cope with the situation. After washing off all the blood I could, I found a tiny cut in his scalp, not more than one-half inch long and very shallow. They told me Dick fell out in the yard and cut his head on a piece of glass. Watching my child's lifeblood run off his elbows as he held his head in his hands, I reacted more sanely than I had with Gerald. Many years later, the boys told me that wasn't really what had happened, but rather that he had fallen off the horse, which they were not supposed to ride except when their father was with them.



*Carver's Station, Smoky Valley, Nevada, as it appeared ca. 1950. The facility was of modular construction. The Carvers purchased a building from Wallace Bird and moved it from Round Mountain to their ranch, where it served as the bar. Carver traded Bird hay for the building. Carver purchased another building in Monarch, located just south of Belmont. That building was moved to the Carver ranch by the Boni brothers, and it became the Carvers' living quarters. The dance hall was constructed in 1949 and is visible to the right of the porch. The Carvers tried to have dances on a regular basis, but holding them proved to be a lot of work.*

# Moving to the Station

Although we had moved into our new quarters, much remained to be done. Gerald had built a fenced-in yard at the back where Gary could play while we were working. Stored out there was an old kitchen cabinet, complete with drawers, doors, and shelves. It was there that Barney Barnhill stored tools and paints until he needed them, and he had nailed the door shut so that Gary couldn't get into them.

Barney had just completed painting the kitchen a bright turquoise enamel, which looked great with the knotty pine cupboards he had installed. A few days later, as I checked to see what Gary was up to, I saw, with horror, that he was covered with leftover turquoise enamel—hands, face, hair, clothes! Somehow he had managed to work loose the nail holding the cupboard door shut. Cleaning him up was a long and tedious chore, and the paint remover I used on him did not help him feel any better. But I did get him bathed to wash off the paint thinner, put clean clothes on him, and then cleaned up the spots of paint scattered about the yard and on the cupboard. Then I relaxed as I put him outside in the yard to play.

My relief didn't last long. The next time I went to check on him, he had more paint on his hands, face, hair, and clothes! In cleaning up the yard, I had overlooked the kiddie-car he had been riding, on the handles of which his painty little hands had left a lot of paint. So we started all over again—the paint remover, the bath, the clean clothes, and another bout of cleaning the yard, but this time thoroughly.

We had a couple of dogs, my favorite being an old collie dog



named Butch. But Butch was getting along in years, and I dreaded the day he would go to doggie heaven. The boys were so devoted to him, and he to them, that I couldn't bear the thought of having to tell them when Butch died. I could have saved myself a lot of worry. The boys came to me one day and calmly announced that Butch had died in his sleep out under the dining room window, and could they go with Daddy to bury him? I was devastated—but they accepted death as they accepted life, a couple of real farmer boys.

Our female cat turned out kittens on a regular basis and created much joy for the kids. They knew when she was pregnant, and witnessed the kittens' birth. That, too, was the accepted norm. But the new people who moved into the nearby state road maintenance station with their five-year-old daughter, Kathy, had not had the same opportunity to teach her the facts of life in the city from which they had come. Kathy and Gary were playing in the kitchen, and Kathy started to pick up the cat. Gary warned her, "Be careful of Kitty. She has babies inside of her!" Kathy's mother was furious at me for telling my boys the truth! Kathy had gone home with a story that she could not believe—that babies grew inside the mother. I don't know how Kathy's mother got out of that one, but if I had been in her shoes, I would have been relieved that Kathy learned the lesson in such a natural way.

The butcher at the Safeway store in Tonopah had a dog that was half Saint Bernard, appropriately named Jumbo, whom he had to keep penned in his small yard in town. Eventually Jumbo became mean, so his owner asked us if we would like to have the dog out at the ranch. From the day we brought him home, Jumbo never showed a trace of meanness unless something was threatening to his "family." He instinctively walked between Dick and the fishponds, so Dick couldn't fall in. He was our friend and protector at all times.

One morning we awoke to Jumbo's deep-throated bark to see a carload of Mexican nationals crawling out of all four doors of an old car parked at our gas pump. Gerald let the dog out the back door, and

around the house he went, barking all the way. The occupants of the car scrambled to get back into it, and the car was driven off quickly. I suppose they decided they didn't really need the gas, after all.

But being big and lazy, Jumbo preferred not to hunt, although he was not averse to having someone else do the hunting for him. Our three-legged cat, Stumpy, liked to wander up and down the highway and bring home a jack rabbit some car had hit and killed. It was quite a feat for Stumpy to drag home a rabbit nearly as big as he was, but he'd persevere until he got it home. Jumbo slept in the sun or the shade, depending upon the season, and occasionally opened one eye to peer in the direction the cat had taken. When Stumpy had finally brought the rabbit all the way home, Jumbo would rise sedately, wander over to Stumpy, and graciously accept the gift of the dead rabbit, while Stumpy wandered away looking for some other gift he could proffer. It was as though the two animals had made some kind of contract with Stumpy doing all the work and Jumbo doing all the eating.

## The Winter of '49

The winter of 1948-1949 was the worst in all the years I have lived here. Not only was it very cold, but the wind blew the snow around so much that the roads were impassable for days at a time. There would be a four-foot drift, and next to it, only an inch or so of snow. Actually the snow blew around so much that winter that there was little moisture left in it by spring. A huge drift would melt in the April sun, and under it there would be only a damp spot.

At that time our water supply consisted of a hydraulic ram at the pond below the station, which pumped water up to a tower, and the water came into the station by gravity. It didn't take long to find the flaws in that system. The whole thing froze up, and Gerald had to haul all the water we needed in large tubs, carried in the back of our station wagon. I had an Easy Spindryer, and once a week, Gerald had to haul enough water to wash and rinse all our dirty clothes. On one particular day, he had brought the car to the front door and was just ready to bring in the water when some customers arrived. He served them their drinks and sat down behind the bar to chat with them. I wanted to get on with the washing, so I put on Gerald's galoshes to wade through about four inches of new snow on the porch, taking my two buckets out to fill them from the tubs. The toe of the overshoe was a little longer than I was used to, and I tripped as I stepped back onto the porch. Down I went, flat on my front, spilling the two buckets of water alongside. I wasn't hurt, but my pride sure took a beating when our friends laughed and laughed. Being soaked through made me even colder.

That winter was so cold that after the early sun went down very few cars were ever seen. But one early evening, we noticed a car going by very slowly, as is proper on ice and snow. I watched the lights go as far as the Round Mountain turnoff, then return even more slowly. Finally the lights stopped in front of the place where the maintenance station was being constructed by the highway department, and the lights were extinguished. The couple who had been in the car soon showed up at our door. The man had a tire iron in his hand, which frightened me a little. As they warmed up by the big stove, they told us that they had been going to attend a golf tournament in Phoenix and had been sent down this way because of a road closure on their intended route. They came from North Chicago. After I decided they were really nice people, I asked the man why he was carrying the tire iron when he came in. He said that they didn't have any other kind of weapon and didn't know what kind of wildlife they might encounter walking from where their car had stopped to our place. I laughed at their fears until I suddenly realized that I would probably feel the same way if I had been forced to talk at night in North Chicago—it's all in what you are used to!

The lady was wearing sandals, and her first question was, "How cold is it?" I checked the thermometer, which read twelve degrees below zero. "Why, that's the kind of cold that freezes people to death!" she said. But the air was so still and so dry that her feet hadn't even gotten cold in the three hundred yards or so that they walked. As it turned out, we gave them a place to sleep for the night, and the next day Gerald thawed out their gas line, which had apparently frozen.

After three weeks of being housebound, I got a bad case of cabin fever, so Gerald suggested I follow the snowplows up the road about fifteen miles to where some friends lived and visit them until the plows came south again. I had no problem getting there and enjoyed our talk. But on the return, it took me about five minutes to get my outdoor clothes on and drive back to the highway after I saw the

snowplows going back down the road. That five-minute delay made a big difference, because the snow had already blown over the road to the point where it was very difficult to see where the road was. Since this was open range, there was no fencing to follow, but far up the road ahead, I could see the straight line of the pavement where the plows had just gone through. I had to line up the car with that hill ahead and go, hoping I would stay on the road. My guardian angel was on the job, as always, and brought me home safely.

The highway employees and their families were living in Round Mountain while their new homes and the maintenance station were being built. Since Les Barnhurst and Ted Leon had to plow snow nearly every night, all night, we would leave the back door of the station unlocked so that when they came by they could stop for a cup of coffee and get warmed up by the big oil stove, where I always left a pot of the fragrant brew for them. The first night they did this, Jumbo was outdoors and felt they had no business going toward the back door, so he barked furiously at them, although he knew them well and was their friend. When they kept right on going in spite of his barking, he tried a new tack. He grabbed the tail of Les's pea coat and pulled back, almost upending Les. The men finally talked Jumbo into letting them go into the house. After that first night, he always barked at them mildly, but he made no further attempts to stop them as they came by night after night that winter.

## Schooling for the Boys

In order to get the boys off to school, we had to arise by seven, and during the time that Gerald drove the school bus, which was our station wagon, even earlier. I got the kids out of bed and fixed their breakfast and lunches while Gerald swept the floors in the front, policed the restrooms, and polished up the bar and café.

The original school bus run was a parent-oriented project, but the school board eventually supported it. At that time our school board was purely local (as opposed to the countywide system now in operation). Our local board consisted of three members who had very little interest in children, per se. One was a retired old-maid school teacher, the second was her “boyfriend,” a dear sweet man who could be manipulated with a smile and a kind word, and the third, another dear sweet man whose grandchildren had already graduated from high school. Since the two men had no firm convictions, that really intelligent maiden lady could easily sway their thinking into the exact channels she felt were best. One thing she did not want was for our valley children to attend school in Round Mountain—in a different tax district. So she and her cohorts steadily and firmly opposed the support for a school bus. We had no school district in the valley, so we were between the proverbial rock and the hard place.

Finally, in desperation, we went to the superintendent of instruction in Carson City, and word filtered down from there that “outside” taxes did assist the Round Mountain School District and that the local board would support the bus financially. In later years,

after the state legislature had consolidated the small school districts into a countywide system, we had financial support for privately owned buses, and eventually even for school-owned and -operated buses.

During the time that Gerald drove the bus, he transported some children from a large ranch to the north of us. Two of the brothers from there were very quarrelsome with each other. After putting up with their arguments, Gerald finally stopped the bus on the highway, made the two boys get out of the bus, and made them really mix it up with their bare fists until they decided they really didn't want to fight on the school bus, after all.

One of our own sons got smart with his father en route to school one morning. Gerald made him get off the bus about two miles from school and walk, while Gerald took the rest of the children to school. He then picked up our wayward son after he had walked uphill for quite a distance, and gave him a ride the rest of the way to school. Our son decided not to get "sassy" on the bus anymore.

Most of our boys' education in elementary school was in a one-room, one-teacher situation, although the school enlarged when the gold dredge started operating at Round Mountain. We had some fairly good and some pretty bad teachers. The first one I met when I came here was young, pretty, and a real flirt. One elderly man thought she was awfully cute, so he flirted right back. Finally he made her a proposition to which she replied that he was pretty old for such thoughts. He countered with, "There may be snow on the roof, but there's a fire inside!" Of course the girl was so amused that she repeated the quote, and from then on I could barely keep from giggling whenever I saw that man.

Actually, he was a pillar of the community, and so was his wife. During the construction of the highway in 1949, a bridge was to be built over the place where Broad Canyon crosses the road to make the road passable in times of high water. A large excavation was made with a dozer, which piled up a huge mound of earth beside

it. Then a detour took the scarce traffic through the old ditch bed, in a C-shaped route. The Pillars were coming home from a dance in Austin one morning at daylight and missed the C-shaped detour, then drove partway up the side of the mound of earth at an angle. A loud knock on our door at daylight awakened us with a start, and Mr. Pillar asked Gerald to please help him get his car off the mound. When Gerald returned home, he was chuckling with great glee. He told me the car was no problem to drive back off, but when he got in the car to do so, he found that there was a great puddle where Mrs. Pillar had been sitting when the car had gone up the side of the mound.



*Dick Carver and a boy remembered only as "Bobby," riding burros on the Carver ranch, Smoky Valley, Nevada, about 1946 or 1947. This photo was taken at the approximate site where Carver's Station is currently (1990) located. Broad Canyon in the Toiyabe Mountains is visible upper left in the photo.*



## Our Telephone System

The telephone system was a one-of-a-kind arrangement. A single wire went from Austin to Round Mountain, with an operator at each end, and some twenty-five customers whose phones hooked into that line. The operator at Round Mountain was available only during the working day, so after five or on weekends we called the Austin operator. Visitors to our area were fascinated to watch us ring the operator in Austin (one short ring), the operator in Round Mountain (two short rings), or one of our neighbors, any combination of long and short rings. Unfortunately, all rings were heard in all homes in the valley, and we all kept track of each other's goings-on by "listening in." In those old magneto-type phones, the power was quickly drained by all the "rubbernecks," so it was usually necessary to relay all messages more than fifteen or twenty miles away. A long-distance call was almost impossible because it had to be relayed to the Austin operator, who talked to your long-distance party for you. This is not a very satisfactory method of communication.

In the early days, the road to Austin was a wandering trail through the sagebrush, snow-filled in winter because it had been dug out, not filled in, and the snow settled in the low spots. In spring, there was a lot of mud, with many creeks to cross through—creeks that had been created by the snowmelt from the mountains. In summer, the dust was inches deep, and there were occasional pockets of soft dust into which a car would lunge without warning, enveloping the passengers in a choking fog of dust as fine as flour. On the ranches where the road came between the ranch homes and outbuildings, the

owners usually erected an obstacle of some kind to slow down the travelers. Otherwise, the driver might go on his merry way, hitting chickens and stirring up the dust. One rancher built up the roadway with a large culvert pipe, covered with dirt, and if you didn't slow down for it, you were apt to leave the road for a few seconds. It was well posted as an obstacle, but it usually took a driver one try at not slowing down for it before he decided that cars aren't built to fly.

In traveling that lonesome road, each phone subscriber kept an eye peeled for a broken or downed wire—remember that was our only link with the rest of the world. If you found the wire down, you stopped and tried to fix it as well as you could. If there was too much tension to twist the ends back together, you took a piece of baling wire (we all carried it in our vehicles) and twisted that onto both ends. Then, since the likelihood of having a ladder was slim, you carefully put the mended wire on top of the highest sagebrush, so that it wouldn't short out on the bare ground. Periodically, the repairmen came over from Ely and fixed the system correctly, but since Ely was 185 miles away, we couldn't wait for him to come every time the wire broke. Often the trouble was that a cow had rubbed against a pole which had ground-rotted—and down the pole went, sometimes carrying the wire with it, sometimes breaking the wire, especially if the cow got tangled up in the wire.

The operators were unsung heroes who did much for all of us in this area. They'd find the stage driver and tell him to pick up a spool of white thread for you that you had forgotten to tell the driver you needed. They would contact medical help, or do a thousand and one other favors, both great and small, and we appreciated their help enormously. So when the telephone company, in its infinite wisdom, decided to hook us up with the rest of the world, using a system compatible with the outside, they eliminated our local operators when they installed the new dial system. There were still operators, but they were in some remote town far from us. I think we all had some nagging doubts about whether we could function without "our"

operators, but I found out later that the new ones were as helpful as the old.

Once our light plant broke down, and we desperately needed a part to repair it. I recalled that a salesman from Elko had stopped by to eat one day and had mentioned that his firm in Elko handled Witte parts and repair service. Unfortunately, I couldn't remember the name of the man or his firm, but I called the operator (by then located in Winnemucca) and she called the Elko operator. Less than one-half hour later the Winnemucca operator called me back to give me the name of the firm I needed and put me through to them. We got our light plant back in working order, courtesy of an unknown operator.

## Picnics and Dances

The Fourth of July was always a big occasion for the folks in Smoky Valley. In 1945, when Dick was about nine months old, we had a potluck picnic up Kingston Canyon, one of many such get-togethers. I do believe the entire population of Austin, Round Mountain, and Smoky Valley was in attendance. The weather was perfect, and everything contributed to a perfect day. There was more food than even such a crowd could consume in one meal, so we all ate at noon and again at suppertime. There was lots of beer drinking, and horseshoe playing, as well as a steady stream of chatting among friends and neighbors. After supper, a lot of us stopped at the Schmidtlein Ranch at the bottom of the canyon to change our clothes so we could attend the dance at the Hay Ranch, across the valley to the east of the Bowman Creek Ranch.

Not everyone attended the dance, so we left Dick with a couple of friends living down the valley who went home after the picnic. Those of us who were dancing to the music of a piano and a fiddle, played by local musicians, didn't have sense enough to go home until dawn showed faintly in the east. Gerald and I started off in the old Model A Ford and were tootling along the dirt road, not too sure about where we were or where we were going. Suddenly there was a wire gate in front of us, closed and not marked (usually a stick of wood in the middle of it indicated a gate). By the time we saw the three strands of barbed wire across the road, it was too late to stop, so we barreled on through it, breaking the fence, and not doing the Ford much good either. Actually, right after that, the radiator

started steaming. Upon investigation, Gerald found that when the hood came off, the wire had broken a spark plug and punched a few small holes in the radiator. Fortunately there was a nearby creek still running from snowmelt, so he found a tin can and filled the radiator. By going slowly and filling the radiator every time we came to a source of water, we were able to limp on home.

If Austin held a rodeo for the Fourth, we always tried to attend that. The show was strictly amateur, and always fun, but I never got over the anxiety of seeing someone I knew being bucked off, trampled on, or kicked by a horse. If we could find someone who would mind the station for us, we often danced all night, then came home the next morning, worn to exhaustion and not in too good shape, but happy.

The music in Austin was always provided by one of the nicest couples I ever knew, Millie and Bert Acree. Millie could play anything she had ever heard—but never too slowly. Dancing all night to their music was like getting one's exercise for a couple of weeks! In 1949, when the construction crews moved into Smoky Valle to build the new highway and another crew moved in to construct the world's first "dry-land dredge" at Round Mountain, the folks wanted something special for amusement, so we built the dance hall on the south end of the building and held dances every other weekend in the summer. It worked—oh boy, how it worked!

Millie and Bert played for as many of those dances as they could. When they started playing for our dances, they had already played for dances in Smoky Valley for fifty years! Long before I came here, there had been a dance hall at Darrough's Hot Springs, a couple of miles to the north of us, and they had played for dances there when they were both very young.

I can still see Millie preparing to play for a dance. We had bought a lovely old piano from Rose Walters, in Manhattan. Millie would begin by taking off the top and front covers of the piano in order to expose the hammers and strings. Then she took off the front panel at

the bottom below the keyboard and set out the largest glass ashtray I ever saw. She loved to play that piano. While she was getting things ready to her liking, Bert was setting up his drums, as he greeted their many friends who clustered around them waiting for the music to begin. There was no waiting for the dance floor to fill up when the Acrees were playing. The thing that always amazed me was that neither one of them ever took an alcoholic drink to give them the energy to play all night. Everyone else had to imbibe in order to keep up the pace of the dancing, but this beautiful old couple could play and play for the sheer joy of seeing their friends have such a good time.

Meanwhile, Gerald and I would be inside the café-bar serving drinks. We hired a nearby neighbor, Teddy, to help us tend bar on dance nights. And my friend, Leona, and her husband, R. E., from Manhattan, always came over to help us, too. At about ten o'clock, Leona and I would retire to the kitchen and assemble sandwiches to serve for midnight supper, along with the previously prepared potato salad and assorted snacks. The dance and the suppers were always free, and we made our money on the bar.

Teddy was a short, stocky young man, originally from Massachusetts. He was working for the highway department and welcomed a chance to add a few dollars to his income. He had a very pleasant personality, and, since Gerald also had the same trait, they worked well together and kept most of the customers as happy as possible. But there was usually at least one drunk who wanted to make trouble—and that Gerald did not allow. At one of the very first dances in the dance hall, two drunks wanted to quarrel, so Gerald made them go outside, where they were surrounded by male spectators, and they were forced to fist fight each other. Since all they really wanted was attention inside the building, the fight did not last long, and they decided that they really liked each other a lot—so they went inside and had another drink!

But one evening, a really obnoxious drunk from the old Newpass

Mine joined the dancers, and began punching people in the back inside the bar. When he refused to listen to Gerald saying, "Knock it off," Teddy jumped over the top of the bar and picked him up from behind. Someone opened the front door, but just as Teddy was going through it with his burden, the drunk got one arm loose and threw it to the side so that his arm went right through one of the panes of glass in the window of the door. The jagged glass cut his arm seriously, and he was taken to the hospital in Tonopah to have his wounds sewed up.

Several years later, one of our friends who had worked at Round Mountain, and who had witnessed the whole bloody mess, went to work at a mine in Tecopa. When his new boss heard that Nate had worked in Round Mountain before it closed, the boss said, "Oh, boy, was that ever a tough town! I went to a dance there one night, and some guy pulled out a knife," as he rolled up his sleeve to show the jagged scars, "and look how he cut me up!" Nate never let on that he had witnessed the whole thing and knew exactly how the scars had been made, after all, mining jobs were not that plentiful at that time, and he had just come to work there!

Actually there was very little trouble, considering the amount of beer and liquor consumed at those dances. At only one dance was there a serious fight, which erupted over nothing, and ended with more black eyes than I have ever seen before or since. There were three different factions there that night—the locals, the mine construction crew, and the road construction crew. One member of the mine crew threw a punch at one of the construction crew men, and the battle spread like wildfire. Almost every man there got into the fracas, and by the end of it, no one knew why they were fighting. I saw the foreman of the highway crew pick up a two-hundred-pound man and toss him over the hood of a pickup like he would a beer can.

# Pat

Pat O'Neil was half-Irish, half-Indian, and a wonderful friend when he was sober. Unfortunately, his penchant for drinking hard liquor eventually led to his downfall. He worked as a cowboy around this country for many years, doing a good job until he hit the bottle. He had a mean streak a yard wide, and I was more than a little afraid of him when he was in his cups. Several times I told our sheriff (who was sheriff for over fifty years and never carried a gun) that I felt the time would come when Pat might kill somebody. The sheriff laughed at my fears and told me to remember that it was only the whiskey that was talking when Pat threatened someone.

One Sunday afternoon, though, it happened, just as I had feared. Jack Partik and Bonnie Ornelas and his lady friends were sitting in our bar hoisting a few beers, when Pat arrived, drunk and mean. Jack and Pat traded insults, and Pat went outside to his car and soon returned, opened the screen door, and poked a .30-.30 rifle in the opening. Pat pointed the gun at Bonnie and shot him. Bonnie fell to the floor, mortally wounded. He died from loss of blood some twenty minutes later. Gerald and the couple working there did their best to help, but nothing could stanch the flow of blood.

The deputies from the sheriff's office came out from Tonopah, the body was removed from the floor, all the witnesses who could be found were questioned, and finally, everything got put back in order and life went on as usual.

I had been attending a two-week summer school course in Reno and was terribly shocked when I turned on the radio to hear that



Carver's Station was in the news and that my worst fears had been realized. I called home and was assured that everything was all right and back in order. But Pat had escaped in his car. The next morning the Sheriff from Austin drove to his cabin at the foot of Wildcat Canyon, and Pat was apprehended without further incident.

I was so ashamed that I had to steel myself to attend class the next morning. I felt that everyone would be looking at me and somehow blaming me. But I was wrong. Not even one person connected me with the evil deed, and I did manage to complete the course and return home the next weekend.

Gerald told me, when I got back, that out of the tragedy and shame, one funny thing had emerged. At the time of the shooting, three tourists from California had stopped by for a little liquid refreshment, and each had put a handful of money on the bar to buy a round. When there was time for Gerald to look around, after the shooting, the three little piles of money and three cans of beer were still sitting on the bar, but the three tourists had evaporated like dew in the morning sun. They had to have escaped out the back kitchen door, because all the fuss was toward the front door. I can imagine the tourists returning to their native land and warning all their friends about going to that wild and woolly Nevada, where gunmen still reign supreme. Actually, it was the only time in my experience that a serious conflict erupted on the premises. There were minor altercations, but nothing quite so bad as that.

My friend Bill Thomas, the sheriff, had been in southern California for medical treatment at that time. When he returned to work, he came out to the valley to visit. He asked me whether I had been present at the shooting, and I assured him that I had not. "You know, Jean," he said, "I was always afraid that Pat would end up doing something like that!" I kept silent and didn't remind him that that was my line, not his. After all, he was a dear, sweet friend, much older and wiser than I, and deserved my respect.

Pat was tried and convicted of second-degree murder, and spent

five years in the penitentiary at Carson City. Upon his parole, he returned to Smoky Valley, and I lived in dread of him for a few more years before he died a natural death. Actually, his parole terms forbade the use of liquor, so he could not go into the bars anymore, and he never hurt anyone else. His incarceration in prison had broken both his health and his spirit.

That was the worst but not the only time that Pat frightened me. One time he had gone up Wall Canyon with five of his drinking buddies to go deer hunting. They stopped the two cars partway up the canyon and got into some kind of verbal disagreement. Pat suddenly drew a bead on three of his buddies and threatened to shoot them on the spot. Fortunately, two of his friends were standing behind him as he threatened the others. They managed to wrestle the rifle away from Pat, then beat him to a pulp, leaving him for dead on the ground. They drove out of the canyon to the nearest telephone and reported the incident to the sheriff's office. When the officers arrived at the place in Wall Canyon where Pat had been left, no one was there. Because of the rocky ground underfoot, it was hard to track him, and the deputies didn't know what to expect.

Later that day, I heard what had happened, and my first thought was that Pat would hike to Carver's at once. There was nothing to do until he did appear, and apparently he had been disarmed, but I still felt apprehensive. Soon a family, mother, father, and two teenage children, came in and were drinking a soda while Gerald filled their car with gas. The father asked, a little too superciliously to suit me, "My word, what on earth do you do out here for excitement?" So I told him what Pat had been up to that day, and that I expected him at the bar momentarily. He became very pale, grabbed his wife and children, and ushered them out to the car immediately. I'll bet that he made record time going back to Oregon. Actually, Pat did not show up for several days and then only went to his cabin, not to our place. He had been hurt, but not as seriously as his friends had thought.

Another time I got very angry at Pat for punching his best friend, Jay Barclay, in the eye, so I refused to serve him. He was already drunk when he came in and had caught Jay outside on the way from the gas pump to the front door. Pat was angry, too, and followed me out into the kitchen where we traded scathing words. I had my glass chin stuck as far into his face as I could get it when he began a swing clear from the floor. In my anger, I didn't even flinch, and I'm sure he would have knocked me clear out if he had connected with my chin. But about halfway through the swing, he stopped his fist in midair and began to cry great tears of contrition. Some of his cronies gently led him outdoors and sent him home, but it took me a lot longer to feel sorry for him—and to realize how foolish I had been.

There were occasionally others folks who were raucous and caused problems, but Pat stands out as the worst. I did not attend his funeral, and I did not miss him when he was gone. Most of the other miscreants I could talk out of a bad mood, but Pat only scared me, and consequently, made me very angry.

## Customers, Good and Bad

One usually nice man, a superintendent of a construction crew, threw a tizzy in the bar one night. He swung his cowboy hat along the bar, upending all the glasses and drinks, then tossed the hat into the back bar. My instant anger got the best of me. I picked up the largest bottle I could see within reach, saw it had a Scotch label, set it down, and picked up a quart bottle of 7-Up. I was prepared to clobber him with that bottle. when his crew decided that they would remove him from the premises. He apologized a couple of days later, offered to pay for any damages, and we were friends again.

Almost all of our customers were friendly and good-natured, often very comical. I enjoyed the privilege of getting acquainted with everyone who lived within a huge radius of our place. A lot of the Indians from the reservation in the valley to the west of us would come in to buy a few drinks or some gas, to have a bite to eat, or to play the slot machines. But everyone knew the rules made in the first years of our business—that when the lights went off about eleven (except during dance nights), no more drinks would be served. However, it was known that if you really needed gas, we would get up, turn on the light plant, and fill up your gas tank.

One night, Gerald was gone, and I was asleep when a loud knock sounded on the door. Sleepily answering it, I found two Indian friends from the reservation, meekly asking if they could please get some gasoline so they could drive around through Cloverdale and Indian Valley to the Yomba Reservation. Of course I got it for them. One of them came inside to pay me for the gallon and a half of gas,

which was all it took to fill up their tank. He smiled sweetly and said, "Gee, Jean, as long as you are up, could I please buy a six-pack of beer?" I was so amused by his clever ploy that I sold it to him. He had plenty of gas in the car to get him home. He just needed a little for himself!

One of my dearest and oldest friends was a half-Indian, half-Italian named Frank Nola. He and Gerald were great friends. In his younger days he did do a little drinking on occasion, and one night he and Emmett Rossi, a Shoshone Indian friend, had a little party at the ranch where they worked. They then decided to brave the winter elements and come on down to Carver's for a bit more. As things turned out, they began to quarrel with each other almost as soon as they arrived, so Gerald sent them outdoors to fight it out. He locked the doors and they "had at it." One would knock the other down, then stand and kick him in the head until he got back up. I still don't know why they didn't kick each other to bits. When they had had enough, they shook hands and asked to come back in, so Gerald bought them each a Coke; they washed up and started back for the ranch where they worked. A couple of miles up the road, the car slipped off into a snow bank, so Emmett walked back to get Gerald's help in extricating the car.

When the two men got back to the car, Frank was out cold. Emmett had left the engine running and the tailpipe was buried in the snow, so carbon monoxide poisoning was setting in fast. Gerald pulled Frank out of the car and he soon regained consciousness in the cold winter air. From that day on, Frank was our friend. We attended his funeral recently and will miss his smiling face and mischievous ways always.

## A Visit to Los Angeles

In 1951, we took a trip to Los Angeles to visit an aunt and uncle of mine from Vermont who were wintering in southern California. Gary wasn't in school yet, so he accompanied us. It was his first trip "to the outside," as they say in Alaska. There were all kinds of interesting sights for a five-year-old. "Why did they drive all those nails in the telephone poles?" was his first question after we crossed the California border, and the questions increased in number and complexity from there on.

My relatives did not have a TV, but friends who lived nearby did, so one evening we visited them so we could watch the boxing matches on their television. We weren't particularly interested in the boxing matches, but really did want to see this new miracle—a TV—that we had only heard about. Gary was sitting on my lap when the fights began. In a few minutes, he looked up at me and said, "They don't fight half as good as our Indians!" He and his brother, climbing onto bar stools so that they could see out the windows, had watched Frank and Emmett's fight. And you know, he was right!

Every time we bought anything, Gerald would give Gary the loose change, and by the time we had been there for a week, Gary had a tidy sum weighing down his pockets. The day before we left for home, Gary asked if we were going shopping again. "I don't think so. Why?" I asked. Hauling out all the money he had cached, he replied, "I gotta buy something. I gotta get rid of this darned stuff somehow!" (He hasn't changed much in that respect, even now!)

# Pets

We always had lots of pets, usually dogs and cats. Dick was the one the cats liked best. Stumpy, an old gray cat who had only one hind leg, the other having been cut off with the mowing machine out in the alfalfa in his kittenhood, loved Dick more than all the rest of us put together. One time, Stumpy finally came home after a week or two spent tomcatting, and he was so glad to see Dick that he hopped the length of the café on his one hind leg, his front feet firmly planted on Dick's arm.

One thing that Stumpy would not stand for was someone fighting. When Gerald and I would dance together, he'd walk around and around us, growling softly, as if to tell his humans that they shouldn't be doing whatever that funny thing was that they were doing. One night the two boys got into a scrap on the bedroom floor. Stumpy prowled around them, growling for a little while, then broke up the fight very efficiently by reaching over and biting Dick (who was the bigger, then, and was on top) on the head.

We had been given a purebred boxer dog that we named Vikki. She was a good companion for the boys, and she played with them constantly. Her first batch of puppies, crossbred of course, was born under the house. At that point in my career, I could not have cared less, for I had caught the chicken pox from the boys and was too sick to die, though neither of the boys were even sick with it. I could hear the puppies and my sons all under my bedroom, in the crawl space, but I was hard put to show any enthusiasm when the boys came up to tell me there were five beautiful puppies. However, they were

concerned because the puppies had long tails. I mumbled something about puppy tails having to be cropped when they were tiny, but said, "Please, go away and let me sleep." A couple of days later, the boys came in to tell me that they had cut off the puppy-dog tails! Sewing shears are very sharp and did a professional job. Strangely enough, the kids had even found the correct joint for the bob job.



# Tragedy

Let's face it! Things were not going as well as we had hoped. True, those who stopped by were pleased, and because we were the only stop on State Route 8A between Tonopah, sixty miles to the south and U.S. Highway 50, forty-seven miles to the north, most travelers did stop. But the route just didn't have very many travelers on it at first. Gerald and I therefore decided that I should get a teacher's certificate for teaching in Nevada and try to get a job in Tonopah as the home economics teacher in the high school, while Gerald ran the station and took care of the boys.

My interview with the school superintendent went well, and he was pleased with my transcript from Oregon State, but I needed certain education credits to complete the requirements for a teaching certificate. Investigation revealed that I could take all the necessary courses in just one semester at the University of Nevada in Reno. I needed to enroll by January 28, so the necessary arrangements were made, and I was accepted by the college.

Gerald and I left the station and the boys in charge of friends and drove to Reno to find a place for me to live for one semester. I found a nice place with a private family, thanks to advice from the university. We purchased supplies for the station, loaded the car to the gunwales, and got home very late that evening. We were very tired and went to bed as soon as we had the car unloaded.

But very early, probably about four-thirty that morning, Gerald awoke with severe stomach cramps and pain. In less than ten minutes, he was dead. He had called me to come into the bathroom,

then died in my arms shortly after that. I called to the boys to run and get R. E. Williamson, who was living with us at that time. He came quickly, and between us we put Gerald on the bed and I called the doctor in Tonopah. I told him that I thought Gerald was dead, but he said he would be right out. It was January 26, and a raging blizzard was blowing snow across the highway and filling in all the low spots. But he made it through the storm and confirmed my diagnosis. Thus ended a chapter in my life.

The outpouring of sympathy from friends and neighbors, business associates, and my boys was all that got me through the next few days. I had to contact the school to cancel all plans for a further education, and I notified the lady with whom I had planned to live while in Reno. For with Gerald gone, I had to run the station and take care of the boys.

An old friend, Jack Peters, had been living in a trailer on the property, and between him and R. E., we got through the next few months. I still enjoy looking at a photo one of the kids took of Jack washing dishes for us.

The roof on the storeroom started to leak, so one Sunday morning, Jack and R.E. were up on the roof, mending the leak. Alvie and Clair Anderson, a couple from the maintenance station, dropped by for a beer to the tune of two hammers pounding on the roof. Soon, R. E. came down and into the bar to see who was there. Alvie asked him what was going on with all the noise. R. E. responded, "I'm fixing the roof!" Clair said, "Oh, R. E., you'd better get back up on that roof and stop your hammer. I can still hear it pounding!"

The next few months seem to be erased from my mind, with only bits and pieces of memory still functioning. But I know it all worked out fine, and we went on from there, with lots of help from everyone.

Dick and Gary had always been helpful at the station, but now it behooved them to be even more so. They pumped gas, mopped floors, and did all they could to help, although they were only eleven

and nine at that time. But it soon became apparent that I would need paid help, so I sent for my old friend, Lona, who used to live in Manhattan, but was now living in Denver, asking her to come live with us and help me. She came as soon as she could wind down her job and affairs there.

Lona was a Character (you'll notice the capital "C")! For one thing she rolled her own cigarettes, using Prince Albert tobacco and brown papers. Then she stuck the roll-your-owns into a cigarette holder, which seemed a bit incongruous. Her Oklahoma background had lent a particular spice to her speech. She had few inhibitions when it came to calling a spade a spade. She would never have made it onto the best-dressed list or the beautiful women's list, unless you could see inside. But she was the most faithful friend I ever had, and she would do anything to help someone, anyone, if she were able. Except for the cigarettes, she was a very clean person, but she hated to clean up the kitchen after she had been cooking. We eventually accepted the fact that Lona could bake wonderful pies and cakes, but somebody else would have to clean up the kitchen.

Later on, when the big trucks started coming through the valley, we found it necessary to stay open twenty-four hours a day. Lona chose the graveyard shift, and everyone stopped to eat her great cooking, to tease and laugh with her. Except for a few complaints about her ever-present cigarettes, I think everyone loved her. In the mid 1970s she died of lung cancer, to no one's surprise, but to everyone's sorrow who ever talked to her or knew her. She was one in a million.

# A New York Pickup

In the middle of a very quiet afternoon, a pickup with a New York license pulled up to the gas pump. I was there alone that day, so I went out to fill the truck with gas. A young couple got out and stretched their legs while I was gassing the vehicle. I commented that it was unusual to see a New York-licensed pickup and asked them where they came from. Whatever their answer was, it satisfied me, but I remember adding that I had recently been in that neck of the woods, as my folks lived in New England.

They followed me back to the café and paid the gas bill, then ordered something to eat, which I fixed and served. As they ate, I asked them more questions about themselves, since I had found out that people like to talk about themselves and like to be encouraged to do so. But I noticed that this couple didn't offer any information on their own, and as soon as they finished eating, they left quite fast.

About ten minutes after they had left, a sheriff's car came skidding to a stop by the gas pump, and the deputy got out with an automatic rifle in his hand. I hurried out to fill his tank with gas, as he queried me about my recent visitors in the New York-licensed pickup. It seems that an old couple from New York had been wintering and prospecting near Casa Grande, Arizona, that winter. Their bodies had been found; they had been murdered in their travel trailer, and their pickup was missing. Someone in Tonopah had seen the vehicle and had reported it to the sheriff's office.

The Lander County sheriff's office had sent out officers to set up

a roadblock near the intersection of this highway and U.S. Highway 50. When the couple saw the roadblock, they drove out across the sagebrush as far as possible, but their truck was disabled—I think it hit a big rock or bogged down in a soft spot—so they abandoned the truck, took a rifle from the back of it, and ran for cover. Our sagebrush is not very high in that area, so they had to crawl to escape, but escape they did for that night. And I would be willing to bet they spent a very cold and uncomfortable night in the open. The following morning, by using a spotter plane, the officers were able to pinpoint their location and pick them up for return to face murder charges in Arizona.

I spent that night sleeping very fitfully, for I envisioned them walking to one of the highways and getting a ride down our way. I was sure they would think I was the one who reported them—instead of being the one who asked dumb questions which should have made them mad enough to add me to their list of victims.

# Embarrassment

On a cold winter afternoon, again when I was alone, the door opened to admit a handsome and well-dressed man, obviously a rancher, given the Levis and cowboy boots with cow manure on them. He asked me if I knew Scotty Mullins in Tonopah and said Scotty had told him to have me fix him lunch. Then he asked me about some other people whom I knew in this area, particularly Rene Rogers's mother, Grace Farrington. As he was eating, he told me that he had a ranch in Elko County and another ranch in southern California and that he frequently traveled back and forth between them. I got curious—really, I wanted to be able to tell Rene Rogers about him—so I asked him his name. “McCrea,” he answered. “What’s your first name?” I asked. “Joel,” he replied. My face turned a thousand shades of red. Who hadn’t heard of Joel McCrea? Since I had lived where there were no movie houses, and TV was far in the future at the time, I had never seen his movies, but I had read about him and would have recognized him from pictures if I had only been smart enough to identify his profession.

He really was a rancher, too, though, and as time went on he stopped frequently, and we became good friends. Later he sold his ranch in Elko, and I have not seen him for many years. But he was certainly one of the most famous and well-known people I have ever met, and one of the most courteous and pleasant, as well.

I told Rene about my boo-boo—that I had not recognized Joel—and told her that if he came in when she was working, not to make the same mistake I had made. A couple of weeks later, he came in

again, on her shift, and what did she do? The same exact thing I did! He must have thought we were the most provincial and backward people in the whole world!

## Gary's Bonfire

Fall had arrived in Smoky Valley, and it was time to clean up and get rid of the summer's debris. Some of the men around the station had built a big bonfire and were throwing trash on it as they picked it up. But as they ate their lunch, the fire died down. Gary had seen the men take a can of gasoline to get the fire going well, so he got a can of gas, and rekindled the bonfire, only he didn't know that one has to cut the flow of gas off immediately or the fire will travel right to the can, so he caught himself on fire. He ran screaming for the reservoir behind the house. but one of the men, Jack McMahon, caught him and rolled him in the dirt, putting out the flames. That began both the longest and the shortest ride to Tonopah I have ever made. I can still hear him screaming, as the waves of pain swept over him. My very first new car, a 1956 Mercury Montclair, had lots of speed, and I drove like a wild thing, as fast as I could, without losing control. As I recall, it took me 35 minutes to drive the 60 miles to the hospital. In the emergency room, the doctor and nurses soon made him more comfortable, and he quieted down. Then the admissions nurse came in for a personal history. When she asked my religion, I answered, "Protestant," and Gary sat straight up on the gurney. "What's that?" he asked, with a very alarmed look on his face.

His arm, especially around his elbow, was deeply burned, with lesser burns on his side. He was hospitalized for five days. After the third day in there, he became very listless, and I was really alarmed. But the doctor assured me that it was delayed shock, and that he would be all right. The next day he was better, and the following



day, we were allowed to bring him home. But for long months, the bandages had to be changed every day. He has severe keloid scarring on his arm to this day.

# Moviemaking

In 1971, early in the summer, a movie company representative stopped by to ask permission to use our place for the filming of a sequence in *Vanishing Point*. I was hesitant to allow them to do so but agreed to the idea more from curiosity than anything else. I had never seen a movie being made, and it did seem it would be very interesting.

The next day, several cars, pickups, and a huge double-decker bus arrived, complete with cameras, floodlights, reflectors, actors, actresses, directors, flunkies—you name it. They cordoned off an area around the gas pump where the sequence would be made, then set it all up. They had their own generator in the bus, so they didn't even use our electricity. Then they politely, but firmly, requested everyone to stay inside, out of their way, and began their work.

In the middle of their work, my husband-to-be, Mac Duhme, drove down from Park Canyon and, upon seeing the strange setup and the bus, tried to park right in their way; he was ordered to get out of the way and park somewhere else, and furthermore, to be quiet! Finally, the floodlights were turned off, and the equipment and people were loaded into the bus and vehicles. Several people lingered for a half hour or so, then the apparent “boss” came into the café, thanked me, handed me a fifty-dollar bill, and left.

By then, I was all psyched up to go pick up beer cans, waste paper, cigarette butts, and the like from the outside. But when we went out to police the grounds, they were already cleaner than they had ever been, without a trace of any sort of garbage, not even a cigarette butt.

By the time *Vanishing Point* hit the movie houses in Reno, I was most anxious to see it, but at that time it was impossible for us to get away from Carver's. So I missed it every time it got within a couple of hundred miles of here, and I finally gave up caring about ever seeing it. In fact, except when I look at the few pictures I took of the filming, I seldom ever think of it. Not too long ago, Mac said to me one night (after we had acquired a satellite dish), "Guess what's on!" It was *Vanishing Point*, and I finally got to see it. Except for the sequence they had done here, it was not a movie in which I had any interest at all. It involved a prolonged car chase, and rock and roll music, neither of which engages my interest. I was certainly thankful I didn't go to the expense in time and money to go to Reno to see it in its first run.

RO Ranch, and one day the ranch owner decided to get rid of a lot of very old, useless chickens, mostly rooters with spurs two inches long. Don decided to bring a half dozen of the oldest, toughest birds home, instead of taking them to the dump. He defeathered them, cleaned them well, and put them in our freezer. Don later told a professor of whom he was very fond, (the prof also had a great sense of humor), that he, Don, had been hunting in Colorado and had brought home a good supply of "sage hens." The professor had lived at the RO part of the time when Don worked there, and had meanwhile moved to southern California, but on a visit up here, Don presented him with the frozen so-called sage hens. The prof and his lovely wife were delighted with the gift, said they would take them home and hoped to entertain some of their erudite cohorts with a sage hen dinner. We never heard how this joke came out, but often laughed about what might have happened.

Don and his friends gave us a lot of pleasure while he lived with us. Several of the men at the mine were musically inclined. Don played guitar and sang, mostly western cowboy songs. Another man named Don lived with his wife in a trailer behind the station and that Don picked the guitar and sang, too. Rusty, a single man, also lived in a trailer behind us, and he played the steel guitar with one hand! He had a paralyzed left arm, but he could hold the steel slide while simultaneously strumming the strings with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. It was a remarkable demonstration of what a handicapped person could do if he really wanted to. The three of them played at the station nearly every night, holding jam sessions just for fun. Another fellow from Round Mountain came down with his fiddle to play with the gang from time to time. We all enjoyed the live music, although the jukebox didn't take in much money at that time. But who cared?

The other Don's wife, Claudine, was a particularly lovable young lady with a keen sense of humor. She often worked for me, and we became great friends. I remember the horror I felt the time

that someone came running in to say that Claudine had shot herself in the shoulder with a rifle. In time, she healed from the wound and recovered completely. I never found out why she tried to commit suicide. She seemed to be totally normal, but I guess you never know what goes on in another person's mind.

Another moment of horror, though with a happy ending, came when we looked out the back window to see Rusty's trailer on fire! He had been working the graveyard shift at the mine and was asleep in the trailer, but the people around here managed to get him out without any ill effects, although he lost everything he had in the trailer, including his beloved steel guitar.

# Brownie

Carver's seemed to be a haven for old men who had no homes. I think especially of Brownie Parks, who fixed up a little cabin in which to live behind the station. He came in the early 1950s, and stayed there until he died in the late 1960s. He was a prospector and miner in a time when there was little or no demand for either. He worked during the tungsten boom of the early 1950s, but from then on he just helped us around the station. He had several mining claims for various metals, but how good they were no one ever knew.

Brownie was a small man, with a smile and a good word for everyone. If his stories were to be believed, he had to be hundreds of years old to have had so many experiences in one lifetime. I particularly liked his oft-told story of spending a winter in the high Sierras. As he told it, one night it started to snow and snowed one foot an hour for forty-eight hours, steadily. "It came clear up to the roof of my cabin!" he would say, his eyes twinkling like diamonds. No one that I know of ever pointed out to him that his cabin must have been at least four stories high.

Brownie helped out at the station long and faithfully. He pumped gas, tended bar, even cleared off tables if need be. In return he had a place to live, his meals, and a "family" who cared about him. Since he was not on the payroll, he could "belly up to the bar" whenever someone invited him to have a drink. But if he was tending bar, he would put the brandy bottle from the "well" onto the counter under the bar, surreptitiously pour himself a drink, then down it when he thought I was not looking. He knew I didn't approve of a bartender

drinking on the job, but this went on for years. I never said anything about it because he wasn't being paid to work, so a shot of brandy occasionally was a cheap wage. But then small sums of money started to disappear. The cash register didn't add up when he was behind the bar. But I couldn't prove he was stealing, so I watched and waited.

One evening when the rest of the family was eating dinner in our back dining room, one of the truckers came in for a sandwich and cup of coffee. We chatted awhile, then he left a quarter for a tip, which I saw but did not touch. Brownie, having finished eating, came in to tell me he would watch the front while I ate my dinner, so I left the dirty dishes and the tip on the counter. After I had eaten, when I came back out to the café, the dirty dishes were in the sink, the counter was washed off, and the quarter had disappeared. The principle of the thing infuriated me.

I told him of my long-held suspicions of his dishonesty and that now I knew for sure, because no one else but him had been in the café. He, of course, denied doing anything wrong, but from then on he had orders from the boss (me) that he could come into the station as a customer, but he was no longer allowed to be behind the counters or to touch the cash registers. It hurt us both. I hated to disown him, so to speak, and he hated to be distrusted, although he had gotten by with dishonesty for so many years that I doubt that he ever expected to be accosted with the truth! From then on, he did not come into the station, although he hung around the outside and talked to his many friends who stopped by. After what seemed only a few months' time, he did not show up around his cabin, and I asked someone to check on him. He was permanently asleep in his bed, where he had died in peace.

# Hugh

Later, another older man appeared on the scene, and needed a job and a place to live. His name was Hugh Myers. I hired him to pump diesel and gas, and by then I was able to pay a small wage and his board. We had an old trailer behind the station where he could live. He became the most faithful watchdog, and no one ever cheated me or stole anything if Hugh was around to see it.

Hugh was an enigma. It has been my experience that a liar will also be a thief. Hugh was a liar of the first water. You never heard such “windies,” even from Brownie. But I would swear on my life that Hugh never touched anything that didn’t belong to him. If he wanted a beer, he paid for it. If he tended bar, he never made a mistake at the cash register.

I really don’t know anything about his former life, and we never knew whether he had any living family. He often told us about his daughter, who lived in Seattle (or sometimes Portland) and was an attorney (or maybe a doctor). Hugh would go to Tonopah for a few days of rest and recreation, then come back with a story about his daughter’s meeting him there. When I asked him why he didn’t bring his daughter out to visit us, he’d say she didn’t have time, she was a busy woman. But people in town who saw him there never saw him with anyone. I presume she was a figment of his imagination. And after his death, no inquiries were ever made about him.

He stayed on at the station after I sold out to my son and his wife, but his health failed, and he, too, died in his trailer. Both Hugh and Brownie are buried in the cemetery in Round Mountain. Both were good people and totally devoted to me and my family.



# A Lovebird and a Health Inspector

We always had a variety of pets, usually dogs and cats. But one time we acquired a lovebird, turquoise and white, who became a celebrity in his own right. After he became very gentle, we allowed him the freedom of space in the café-bar as long as the front door was closed. He took to landing on customers' shoulders, eventually tasting their food, and finally sipping their drinks at the bar. We were all very amused at his liking for beer until one day he took a sip of brandy from a shot glass. For about ten minutes, he stood there gasping for breath, and I thought he was a goner. He finally managed to recover and lived a little while longer. However, I always felt his eventual demise was caused by cirrhosis of the liver. He had become a real lush.

The stove at that time was in the kitchen, though later we had a grill installed out in front where we could keep a better eye on what was going on. One morning I was in the kitchen, having just served one of the truckers a stack of hotcakes. He called to me to say, "Jean, did you wash your bird's feet this morning?" "Of course not, why?" I asked. Because he is wading around in my syrup," was the answer. From then on I had to keep the bird in his cage except for late at night, when we sometimes let him join the patrons at the bar.

I always had a large dog, feeling the dog would protect me if need be. The need didn't arise, but it was comforting to know that I had a defender. After many years of being ignored by the health

department, we finally had an inspector show up when the boxer was in the café, lying quietly in her bed beside the heater. The inspector was friendly and polite, and after inspecting the premises, he looked pointedly at the dog and asked me if I knew I should not have a dog in a café. I acknowledged his point but told him that I kept the dog for protection out in the country, in the middle of nowhere. He smiled and said no more about her.

The same inspector came back periodically for a long time, and each time he gave me a new assignment of a new procedure to bring the place up to code. The first was to install a three-part sink. He understood that my finances would not have permitted me to redo the whole place at one time, so during each visit he would suggest another need for change, and we did finally meet all the requirements. I am still grateful to that man, whose name I have forgotten, but whose consideration and kindness remain with me.

# Truckers

Upon completion of a paved road from Austin to Battle Mountain, to connect with what was then U.S. Highway 40, the big truckers hauling produce to Canada and the northern states from California found that by coming through Austin and down through Smoky Valley to Tonopah, thence west to Bishop, California, and south to Los Angeles, they could save both time and mileage. Prior to that, we had seen only livestock trucks hauling through our valley, but a few produce haulers began using the new route. A few years later, when the road was paved from an intersection just west of Eureka on U.S. Highway 50 through Diamond and Pine Valleys to Carlin, on U.S. Highway 40 (now Interstate 80), a great number of truckers started using that shortcut, coming through our way. In the 1960s, we decided it would be good business to install a diesel pump, and stay open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It was a good decision.

That meant that we had to have a man and a woman working each of the three shifts, and help was not easy to find, especially honest and capable help. Although we had a few men pumping diesel who were unable to keep accurate records (legal necessity because of the fuel tax), most of our help were pleasant, willing, and able, and to them I am eternally grateful—to Brownie, Hugh, Bill Berigan, and many others who were not around as long. I remember one period of time when we had no one for the graveyard shift, so I doubled up. After my swing shift was over, I would go to bed, and Lona would call me if someone came in for fuel. In the middle of winter, I would

pull my insulated coveralls on over my pajamas, pull on my boots and mittens, and go out in the cold. I was always able to fill the tanks, check the oil, wash the windshield (using methyl alcohol in the cold weather), and check the tires, but if there was a flat tire, we had to wait until the morning man came on duty at seven. I was always happy when the oil level of a truck was up to par in the wintertime because it took so long to pump oil out of a frigid barrel—I learned what was meant by the phrase “slow as molasses in January”—inserting the word oil for molasses.

One morning, just as the sun came up, the dog and I made our way carefully across the ice-covered highway to fill up a truck with diesel. The tanks were still not full by the time I had checked the oil and tires and had washed the windshield, so to get out of the breeze, both the dog and I sought the shelter of the dual wheels of the truck, which are right under the front end of the trailer, with the heater right above our heads. It was a propane heater, and it suddenly went on with a loud pop, sounding exactly like an explosion in the frozen and silent world around us. The dog nearly became a space traveler before the astronauts did, and I was close behind her. We both had been almost asleep, but I didn’t bother to go back to bed that morning—I was wide awake.

## Rene

My dear friend and confidante, Rene Rogers Berg, started working at Carver's in June 1960. If it weren't for her, I couldn't have made it. It was not only all the work she did, but a great deal more. Whenever I needed her, she was always there for me. If I made a bad decision, she cheered me with her "Oh, well, we'll do it differently next time." I could talk to her with total candor, knowing that whatever I said would go no farther.

Lona worked the graveyard shift for a long time, and she made all the pies. The kitchen looked like a disaster area when she had finished her shift. Unruffled, Rene would relieve her in the early morning, clean up the kitchen, and tell Lona to go on home and get some sleep.

I worked the swing shift by choice. Either I was already a night person or that made me into one. When I arose and dressed about nine or ten, I would wander out into the café for a cup of wake-up coffee. One morning, after pouring my coffee, I wandered back and forth behind the counters looking for something. Finally Rene asked me what I was looking for. I told her I couldn't find my cigarettes. "Jean," she chided gently, "don't you remember that you quit smoking several months ago?"

Sometimes we had a relief person who worked when we had time off, but often we did not, in which case the two working split the shifts, working twelve hours instead of eight, so one of us could have a day off. This happened all too frequently, but Rene and Lona never complained about it. Finally Lona became too ill to work, so

Molly Andreason took her place on graveyard shift. She, too, had a happy, sunny disposition and could face work without flinching.

By then my right foot began getting very painful with rheumatoid arthritis. I finally had surgery on my middle toe, the joint being removed, and a long steel pin was placed through the toe to hold it in place until it healed. I had to wear a toeless slipper and was told to stay off work for three weeks. About a week after the surgery, Molly suffered a heart attack, and there was absolutely no one to replace her right then. Again, Rene came through—she said if I could stand it she didn't mind working twelve hours a day with no time off until we could find a replacement, so I went back to work in my bedroom slipper, from seven at night to seven in the morning. All of the hard work fell on Rene's shoulders, but somehow we made it. And finally I found a replacement for Molly.

# Selling Out

In the 1960s, I had developed rheumatoid arthritis in my feet and hands. Eventually my right hand became almost useless. It would open up on its own, without my volition, causing me to drop whatever I was carrying with it. One evening, I started to serve a well-done steak when my hand opened up and the platter fell to the floor, steak and all. It was then that I decided it was time to call it quits and retire. My son, Gary, and his wife, Bertie, were living next door to the station, and were working for me at the time. I asked them if they would like to buy the station, and they agreed to do so. In the middle of 1975, Gary and Bertie became the proud new owners of Carver's Station.

In 1961, I had met a geologist, Mac Duhme, who was living up in Park Canyon. He and I were married in September that year, and in 1974, we bought a double-wide mobile home and had it put on three acres of fenced land, where we could retire and enjoy our later years. Mac always plants a big garden and I can find all sorts of things to do, so we are happily ensconced in our small world, surrounded by the trees that Mac planted—pines, and many others, including apple, peach, pear, apricot, and plums.

Gary and Bertie built up the business even further, running it for four years and finally selling it to Rene's two sons and their wives: Roger and Anne Berg, and Kenny and Bobbie Berg. About one year later, the station became the property of Greg and Sue Scott, who still operate it. They have made many changes and enlarged the station considerably. With the opening of the big gold mine at Round

Mountain in the mid-1970s, the clientele changed from truckers to miners, and there is now a town around Carver's, a tremendous but not unwelcome change. Carver's now has a service station, propane sales, video rentals, a carwash, laundromat, and a twenty-one table. As of 1990, Rene was still cooking there four days a week. But I am sure that there will never be as much fun running it as we all had at Carver's in the earlier days. Nor as much work! Good luck, folks!





*Carver's Station, Smoky Valley, Nevada, about 1953. Originally the bar room in Carver's Station was rather narrow, it was widened by bolting a number of 2-by-12s together and using that as a roof beam. Ground motion from the first atmospheric atomic test at the Nevada Test Site, located to the south, produced so much shaking that it broke the beam and caused the roof to sag. Ground motion from the nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site was a common experience in Smoky Valley, and residents stated they sometimes felt motion from the underground tests. Jean Carver Duhme instinctively noted the time of any earth motion to determine if it was caused by an announced atomic test or by an earthquake. When tests were conducted in the atmosphere, Jean Carver Duhme did not recall seeing any visible clouds containing radioactive material moving up the valley from the Test Site, but believed that the uranium "boom" during the 1950s at Northumberland in the Toiyabe Mountains could be attributed more to fallout from nuclear testing than to naturally occurring uranium. During the atmospheric testing period, residents in the Smoky Valley wore dosimeter badges, devices for measuring individual exposure to radiation. Dick Carver remembered his first experience of an atomic device being set off in the atmosphere at the Test Site. He arose very early one morning to go fishing in Jett Canyon in the Toiyabe Mountains. Prior to daylight he remembered seeing a "big flash of light... brighter than daylight. And then it [got] dark again. It's amazing how bright it was," he recalled.*

Printed in the United States  
203012BV00002B/1-210/P

